NOTE TO USERS

Page(s) missing in number only; text follows. Page(s) were scanned as received.

48

This reproduction is the best copy available.

UMI®

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

PROJECT DEMONSTRATING EXCELLENCE

Owo: A Frontier Yoruba Kingdom

by

Oladipo Joseph Olugbadehan

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
with a concentration in Arts and Sciences
and a specialization in History

April 8, 2006

Core Faculty: Nancy Owens, Ph.D.

Union Institute & University
Cincinnati, Ohio

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

UMI Number: 3255444

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI®

UMI Microform 3255444

Copyright 2007 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

© Oladipo Joseph Olugbadehan
All Rights Reserved, 2006

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Owo: A Frontier Yoruba Kingdom

By

Oladipo Joseph Olugbadehan

Baccalaureate Degree: College of NJ, 1977
Masters Degree: Rutgers University, 1981
Masters Degree: Columbia University, 1995

A Project Demonstrating Excellence Approved on:

April 8, 2006.
Date

By the Dean of the Graduate College

Dean: Larry Preston, PhD ---------- ----------
Graduate College
Union Institute & University
Cincinnati, Ohio

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Doctoral Committee Members:

First Core: Nancy Owens, PhD (Anthropology, Oregon, 1975)
Second Core: Susan D. Amussen, PhD (History, Brown, 1987)
Adjunct Rowland O. Abiodun, MA (Ind.) (Fine Arts, Toronto, 1969)
Adjunct Funso Afolayan, PhD (History, Ife, 1990)
Peer: Maria-Louise Sidoroff, PhD (Union, 2006)
Peer: Meredith Rode, PhD. (Art History, Union, 2003)
Advisor: Stephen A. Akintoye, PhD (History, Ibadan, 1966)
Consultant: Ekpo O. Eyo, PhD (Archaeology, Ibadan, 1974)

Mentor: Stephen U. Chukumba, PhD (History, Georgetown, 1975)
Internship Coordinator: Kate McCann, MA (Communications, Temple, 1987)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Abstract

Using a combination of oral traditions and written sources, this work reconstructs the history of a tropical African kingdom, the frontier Yoruba kingdom of Owo in southwestern Nigeria, from about the 12th century to the middle of the 20th century. One of a number of kingdoms springing up in this forest country in about the 11th and 12th centuries, Owo developed as a typical Yoruba kingdom, with a system of limited monarchy and careful balances of the interests of society. However, Owo was the closest Yoruba kingdom to another kingdom that was not Yoruba, that had a significantly different political system characterized by nearly complete monarchical absolutism. Inevitably, Owo developed relationships with that kingdom, the strong, expansionist Benin kingdom of the Edo people – in trade, culture, etc. Owo seems to have grown slowly until it came under pressure of this much stronger neighbor. Benin's ownership of coastal territory had positioned her to benefit from the coastal trade with Europeans beginning from the last years of the 15th century. Wealth from the trade and the acquisition of imported weapons of war (European guns), transformed Benin into a formidable adversary to her neighbors. Unable to match Benin's military power, Owo strove for independent survival by entering into creative commercial and political arrangements with Benin. Over time, Owo–Benin relations attained a certain stability featuring much cultural interaction, friendly trade in each other's domain, and traders from both kingdoms' trading side by side far into the interior. Politically, Owo began to be impacted by the Benin system, thereby creating a long history of conflict and instability in the internal politics of the Owo kingdom. In spite of such, however, Owo continued to prosper economically. Owo also developed excellent diplomatic skills that preserved her independence and prevented frequent wars with Benin. Owo's economic prosperity spurred cultural growth and revival, making Owo a great cultural center in Yorubaland. Although Owo's political life never fully recovered from the disruptions imported by her contacts with Benin, Owo never ceased to be a prosperous independent kingdom. The same trends continued under the British and have continued in the context of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

A

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Preface

The subject of this study is the history of the Owo kingdom, a frontier African (Yoruba) state and one of the influential kingdoms in the borderlands of the Yoruba-Edo world in the pre-colonial era. Two factors stand out in this study: first is Owo's advantageous location on the trade routes in the south-central part of modern Nigeria, on the eastern ethnic frontier of Yorubaland. It is argued here that Owo's location at the intersections of the trade routes traversing the area of south-central Nigeria benefited Owo materially as this was an important factor in the rise, growth and wealth of the kingdom.

The second factor is the problem created by Owo's location near the powerful Benin kingdom. To survive Benin's encroachments, Owo developed a very great skill in adroit diplomacy and adaptation. But this was not without its price of internal confusion and a departure from the general Yoruba pattern of participatory monarchy and governance. The internal politics of Owo initially pitted the royal family against the chiefs but from the later part of the 18th century, the split in the royal family provided opportunities for the chiefs to take sides and this gave rise to endemic strife and disunity within the kingdom. This situation pervaded the Owo kingdom under British colonial rule and has continued in the context of independent Nigeria.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the help of a number of people who have contributed in no small measure towards the completion of this project. Initial thanks go to Prof. J. F. Ade Ajayi, Chairman, Provisional Council, Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti in the 1980s, for encouraging me to embark on the quest for a doctoral degree with a concentration on Yoruba history with particular reference to Owo and her neighbors. I am indebted to numerous scholars at the Department of History, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, where I spent a brief period in the 1980s studying towards this project-Professors Akinjogbin, Omosini, Osoba, Olaniyan, Olomola, Olorunfemi, Arifalo and Adediran. I also wish to thank my friend at Ife, Dr. Funso Afolayan, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, for agreeing to serve as an Adjunct here in the US in this unique program. I wish also to thank Dr. Toyin Falola, University of Texas, Austin, TX, for his constant encouragement.

I wish here to acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Wayne Allen, Department of History, College of New Jersey, Trenton, Dr. Steven U. Chukumba, (retired) Department of African-American Studies, College of New Jersey, (mentor and friend since 1975), Dr. Allen M. Howard, Department of History, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey and Professors Marcia Wright and Hollis Lynch, Department of History, Columbia University, New York, for their contributions to my preparation in the study of history. I wish to thank Dr. Joseph Jordan and Dr. Norman Harris, (former First Cores) and particularly, Dr. Nancy Owens, First Core and Dr. Susan Amussen, Second Core, for their unstinted help in seeing me through this program. I also thank Ms. Kate McCann, Manager, New Jersey Superior Court, Record Storage Center, Trenton, NJ, for supervising my internship at her agency.

Many people corresponded with me, gave me advice, made suggestions and provided me with sources for the work in Nigeria over the years. Chief among these people were Chief M. B. Ashara, the historian of Owo and Chief Ademola Osho. In memoriam: my greatest gratitude goes to my maternal grandfather, Chief Adafin Atabanti Fayemiwo, who taught me the history of Owo from when I started sitting on his laps till I left home in 1966. He was my first history teacher. I also wish to thank my paternal grandfather,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chief Adafin Ologede Ogunmola Ajinbuwa, who taught mother the history of Owo, who in turn taught me what she learnt from him. I thank my father–in-law, Chief Olotu Ijasan, the Owore of Owo, (the oldest individual in Owo when he died in 1989 at age 101), for explaining some aspects of Owo history to me in 1983. For granting me interviews, I thank Pa Sumanu Arobo, (Olori-Ebi of Sashere compound), Chief Justus Okoro, (the Aragbagbaiye of Igboroko Quarter) and Chief Abraham Adafin Daramola, (the Akowa of Iloro Quarter) and Chief Asolo Otegbeye, Secretary to Olowo Ogunoye II. I am particularly grateful to Chief Abraham Ojo Olakunori, the Elerewe, for letting me see the Notes on the history of Owo prepared by his grandfather, Elerewe Adekanye, (*Elerewe Agba or Elerewe, the Elder*). I thank Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin, the first civilian Governor of Ondo State of Nigeria, for showing a keen interest in my career progression in the academic field and the completion of this project. It is unfortunate that he did not live to see it completed. I thank Sir Olateru Olagbegi for taking the time to sit down with me during my interviews with him at his residence on the Owo-Ikare road in 1985. I also thank His Highness, Oba Adekola Ogunoye, the then Olowo of Owo, for granting me an interview and for his special prayers for me.

I wish to register my profound gratitude to Rowland Abiodun, John C. Newton Professor of Fine Arts and Black Studies and Chairman of Black Studies, Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts, for stirring up my spirit after I had abandoned the work and for reviving my flagging energy along the way. I wish to register my deep gratitude to Professor S. A. Akintoye, my informal advisor, for bringing his unique scholarly gifts and tremendous knowledge of the Yoruba world to bear on the writing of the dissertation. However, all the errors and inaccuracies therein remain mine.

I thank Mr. Ben. Ojegbani for copying the required archival materials at the Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan, my daughter, Mrs. Seyi Olugbadehan-Ashade, (now in Ireland), who worked with him and preserved the documents in Lagos, and the Hon. Abayomi Ode, Member, Ondo State House of Assembly, Akure and Mr. Ayan Kolawole, of Willingboro township, New Jersey, USA, for conveying the bulky documents to me here in the United States. My sister-in-law, Mrs. Comfort Ade Kayode of Ibadan, for serving as the link between Africa and the United States of America following the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

departure of Seyi. Mrs. Kayode carried out my stream of demands during the research period without making a misstep and for that I am very grateful.

I am grateful to my mother, Madam Eunice Tinuade Olugbadehan, who single handedly sponsored my early education following the death of my father when I was only four years old and during a time when most of my contemporaries with both parents alive did without.

My wife, Mrs. Nola Olugbadehan (nee Ijasan), stood by me and showed total devotion to our family. I thank her for her readiness to bear any hardship for her children and make any sacrifice so I can achieve the objective of completing this project. I thank my children: Seyi, Abiola, Abidemi, Olumide and Olatokunboh for their love and support.

+ This work is dedicated to the memory of my father, Mr. Josiah Olugbadehan.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....iv

Preface v

Acknowledgements.....vi

Table of Contents.....ix

Abbreviations..... ..x

Maps.....xi

Plates.....xii

Chapters

1. Introduction to Study.....1
2. Introducing the Yoruba People.....36
3. The Foundations of Owo Society.....48
4. The Infant State: the Early History of Owo.....74
5. The Political Economy of Pre-colonial Owo.....105
6. Owo kingdom and Benin expansion 118
7. Oshogboye's legacy and the Strong Kingdom, c1648-c1833.....144
8. Owo in the 19th century..... 176
9. The Traditional Government of Owo in c1900.....197
10. Owo under British colonial rule and in independent Nigeria.....239
11. Conclusion.....294

Sources and Bibliography..... 306

Appendix 340

Appendix 1. Timeline
Appendix 2. Lists of the Olowos and approximate dates of reign
Appendix 3. British Administrative Officers, c1902-c1956
Appendix 4 Narratives: the antecedents of Joseph Oladipo Olugbadehan
Appendix 5. Populations
Appendix 6. Owo–Edo Terminology Correspondences
Appendix 7. Paraphernalia and rituals terms
Appendix 8. Glossary
VITA

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ABBREVIATIONS

AA: African Arts

AEH: African Economic History

AG: Action Group

CEA: Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines

Cf: compare

CSSH: Comparative Studies in Society and History

EAS: East African Studies

HA: History in Africa

IJAHS: International Journal of African Historical Studies

JAH: Journal of African History

JAS: Journal of the African Society

JRGS: Journal of the Royal Geographical Society

JHSN: Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria

JIH: Journal of Interdisciplinary History

JRA: Journal of Religion in Africa

NAI: National Archives, Ibadan

NCNC: National Council of Nigerian Citizens

NPC: Northern Peoples Congress

op. cit.: upper citation

PRO: Public Records Office

TAJH: Trans-African Journal of History

WAJA: West African Journal of Archaeology

WEADM: West Equatorial Africa Diocesan Magazine

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Maps

Fig. 1. Nigeria - Ethnic Groups
Source: Ikime, Groundwork of Nigerian History, 1980:35

Fig. 2. Yoruba Urban Centers
Source: Ikime, Groundwork of Nigerian History, 1980: 63

Fig. 3. Yoruba kingdoms
Source: Allen Wardwell, (ed.) Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought, 1989: 51

Fig. 4. Migration from Ife to Owo.
Source: Poynor, 'Ancestral Arts in Owo,' 1978

Fig. 5. The Owo kingdom.
Source: Poynor, 'Ancestral Arts in Owo,' 1978

Fig. 6. The Benin kingdom in the 19th century
Source: Ikime, Groundwork of Nigerian History, 1980:39

Fig. 7. The Yoruba-Edo speaking peoples and their neighbors before c1600.
Source: Ajayi, J.F.A, History of West Africa, 1971:198

Fig.8. Thrusts of the Benin invasions in the 17th century.
Source: Ikime, Groundwork of Nigerian History, 1980: 117

Fig. 9. Settlements connected with the Afin (palace) at Owo and Oyo.
Source: Ojo, Yoruba Palaces, London, 1966:45

Fig. 10. Owo and her Neighbors
Source: Adekambi, 'Owo in the 19th century,' 1977

Fig. 11. Major Trade Routes in Yorubaland in the 19TH century.
Source: Mabogunje, Urbanization in Nigeria, 1962:86

Fig. 12. The Ibadan Empire, 1861-1893.
Source: Mabogunje, Urbanization in Nigeria, 1962: 192

Fig. 13. Southern and Eastern Yorubaland – Urban Centers.
Source: Ojo, Yoruba Palaces, London, 1966: 58

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Plates

1. Oluwore girls dressed in beads
2. Chief Ojomo in full royal regalia
3. The 'Iya Olorisa,' 'Prophetesses of Ifa'
4. The Ojomo in royal regalia for the Igogo festival
5. The modern three storied part of the Afin (palace), Owo.
6. A Yoruba Oba wearing a crown with beaded fringes
7. The Olowo of Owo in one of his royal regalia, modern Ore

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This study deals with the history of Owo kingdom, a frontier Yoruba state in southwestern Nigeria. The Yoruba are among the largest homogenous ethnic groups of Africa, occupying a territory, before British colonial rule, roughly the size of France and today, numbering about 30 million people. Throughout their known history, before British rule was imposed on them in the last decade of the 19th century, the Yoruba had lived in many small kingdoms.[1]

Each kingdom was made up of a central city, the king's city, and a few subordinate towns and villages.[2] The king's city constituted the totality of his kingdom at first and from these the subordinate towns and villages were founded or added. It was in the king's city, therefore, that each kingdom's unwritten constitution evolved.

The Owo kingdom was one of these kingdoms of the Yoruba people.[3] It was located in the deep forests of the southeastern fringes of Yorubaland. Its location in the junction of many forest routes helped it to develop early into one of the richest and most influential kingdoms of the eastern Yoruba forests.

This study deals with the issues raised by the location of Owo on the borderlands between the main body of the Yoruba people and the neighboring non-Yoruba kingdom of Benin. It is a study of how an African kingdom, arising with a typically Yoruba political and cultural attributes, responded over many centuries to very close commercial

---

[1] Some of the major kingdoms in modern times include Ife, Abeokuta, Ilaro, Lagos, Oyo, Igboho, Iwo, Oshogbo, Ogbomosho, Ijebu- Ode, Ilesha, Ketu, Ondo, Owo and Ado-Ekiti, Ikerre, Okitipupa, and many more.

[2] Smith, R. S. Kingdoms of the Yoruba, London, Methuen, 1969: 32

[3] Smith, Kingdoms, 45

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and cultural interactions with the powerful kingdom of Benin and ultimate Benin political pressure.

The study commences with the founding of the Owo kingdom in about the 12th century and ends with a light on how that kingdom has come through history, as shown by its behavior under British rule[4] and in independent Nigeria in the 20th century. The study is not exclusively political as religious beliefs and practices, social organization, the arts and other non–political aspects of the people's history are also discussed.[5]

In order to understand the factors and the course of the events which have shaped this history, it is pertinent to begin by a review of the general and overall situation of the Yoruba people. The region of southwestern and central Nigeria is composed of several ethnic groups. Among these groups are the Bariba, Nupe, Igala, Edo, Esan (Ishan), Afenmai, (Kukuruku), Urhobo, Ebira (Igbirra) and the Yoruba.[6] Because the Yoruba are the most numerous and most widespread geographically among these groups, the Yoruba had tended to dominate these other groups culturally and had maintained social and political paramountcy over much of the region before the 19th century. But, at the same time over the centuries, the other groups have also left significant impact on the cultural life of the Yoruba peoples they were in contact with, particularly, at the periphery.[7] There were intimate interactions between and among these groups in the frontier zone and in

[4] Elerewe, 1927, Beeley, 1934, Ashara, 1951.
[5] To aid the reader in following the historical sequence of events in Owo history, and to place pre-colonial Owo history in context, a timeline from the 12th century to the 1970s is provided in Appendix 1, p. 340.
[6] See Map, fig. 1.
[7] Given the fact that the Bariba and Nupe have influenced the socio-economic and political life of the people of Oyo to the north and the Dahomians have also impacted the life of the Egba/Egbado, the Awori and the other settlements to the west, it is not surprising to find the same sort of impact of the Edo and the Isan on the socio-economic and political life of their Yoruba neighbors: Ekiti, Ondo, Owo, Akoko and Ikale, in the eastern part of Yorubaland. (See the map of Yorubaland and their neighbors).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

several dimensions which include the sharing of similar traditions of origin, claims of kinship ties, trade relations, religious observances and other aspects of cultural life.

This study fills a gap in our knowledge of the history of the Yoruba people. This gap exists as a result of the fact that while the whole Yoruba cultural group has been extensively studied and the products of such studies reflect the overall and general attributes of the people, such studies have tended to focus on those areas of Yorubaland close to or near the coastal entrepot to the neglect of the other areas in the north, west and east.[8] By the early part of the 19th century, Europeans had penetrated the West African Guinea Coast.[9] Those Europeans - writers, travelers, explorers and missionaries- left their observations of the daily lives of the people of Yorubaland and in some cases even recorded events as they unfolded.[10] Based on these sources, studies done on the Yoruba people, so far, are basically on the western half of Yorubaland where written records left by Europeans are available.[11]

But that is not the case in the eastern and the northeastern parts of the Yoruba speaking country. This study focuses on the Owo people of eastern Yorubaland because, like the eastern and the northeastern Yoruba groups, it has been ignored, being too far removed from the coastal entrepot. Europeans had, indeed, established contacts with the Benin kingdom as early as the 15th century.[12] However, because of the constant warfare

---

[8] Newbury, C.W., The Western Slave Coast and its Rulers: European Trade and Administration among the Yoruba and Adja Speaking people of Southwestern Nigeria and Southern Dahomey, London, 1961; The same neglect for different reasons can be observed in the historiography of Yoruba states further west. For this, see Elisee A. Simounni, 'Dahomean Yoruba,' in T. Falola, Yoruba Historiography, African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1991: 65-74.

[9] An example of these visitors was Duarte Pacheco Pereira who visited the West African Guinea Coast in the 16th century and left a record of his observations in a book published in 1506 in Guinea Bissau, entitled *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis.*

[10] For example, Hinderer, Anna, Seventeen Years in the Yoruba Country, London, 1872.

[11] For example, Newbury, The Western Slave Coast.

[12] Ryder, A.F.C., Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897, London, 1969.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and hostility between Owo and the Benin kingdom, (a mere 77 miles apart), before the 19th century, and because of their language differences, European visitors to Benin never ventured to Owo, as it was beyond the territories that were firmly in the Benin sphere of influence. Lack of source materials and the difficulty in understanding the Owo dialect of the Yoruba language, which has been significantly influenced by the neighboring Edo language, have also combined to make modern writers and researchers shy away from engaging in any meaningful study of Owo history and culture.

While a few historical and scholarly works have been done on the eastern Yoruba areas,[13] much remains to be studied. In a recent study, Afolayan has shown the need for work on the history of the eastern Yoruba area.[14] After showing that most of the work done on Yorubaland so far has been mainly on the western parts only - Egba, Oyo, Ijebu, among others - he suggests that it is time we paid more attention to the study of the history of the eastern Yoruba area, and that the need has become urgent. He identified Akoko, Owo, Ondo, Ikale, and Ilaje as those parts of the eastern Yoruba country which need the kind of study comparable to the ones already done on the western parts. He further suggests that a study of eastern Yorubaland could also focus on the socio-political organization of the various Igbomina, Ekiti, and O-kun-Yoruba as such studies would contribute to African historiography in the areas of state formation processes, internal

---

[13]Akintoye, S. A., 'The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, 1870-1895,' JAH, Vol. 10, #-4, 1969; 'The Northeastern Yoruba Districts and the Benin Kingdom,' JHSN, Vol. 4, #-4, 1969: 539-553; Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840-1893:Ibadan Expansion and the Rise of Ekitiparapo, Longman, 1971; Akomolafe, C. O., 'The District Head System in Akoko, 1914-1935,' Odu, (new series) # 18, 1978:27-44; 'The British Administration and its impact on Owo-Akoko Relations,' JHSN, 10/1, December 1979:65-85. Olomola, Gabriel Ishola, 'Pattern of Inter-Group Relations in Eastern Yorubaland in the Pre-Colonial Period,' PhD Dissertation, Department of History, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, 1977; Poynor, Robin, 'Ancestral Arts in Owo, Southwestern Nigeria,' PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, South Bend, Indiana, 1978

[14] Afolayan, Funso, 'Towards a History of Eastern Yorubaland,' in Toyin Falola, (ed.) Yoruba Historiography, African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1991:75-87

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

socio-political issues, intra- and inter–group relations, settlement patterns, military alliances in the pre-colonial period and the role of the eastern Yoruba in the Atlantic Slave Trade.[15]

The Research Question

Since this study is concerned with a kingdom on the frontier, we need to explore the meaning and implication of the word 'frontier'. The word 'frontier' was borrowed into English from French in the 15th century with the meaning 'borderland,' the region of a country that fronts on another country. In a recent seminar someone discussing the issue of the frontier has defined the frontier simply as 'that shifting space in which two cultures encounter one another.'[16]

The use of frontier to mean 'a region at the edge of a settled area' is a special American development. During most of American history the edge of the settled country was the place where unlimited cheap land was available to anyone willing to live the hard but independent life of the pioneer farmer. It has long been recognized that the experience of frontier life had an important part in shaping American society and character. Frederick Jackson Turner first drew attention to this theme in the 1890s. The Frontier Thesis or Turner Thesis is the conclusion of Frederick Jackson Turner that the wellsprings of American exceptional traits and vitality have always been the American frontier, the region between urbanized civilized society and the untamed wilderness. In

[15] Afolayan, 'Towards a History.'

[16] This discussion was in reference to 'Frederick Jackson Turner: Progressivist Evolutionist vs Ethno-historian,' in Arnold Krupat, Ethno-criticism: Ethnography, History and Literature, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992: 3. The seminar was conducted by Nancy Owens, PhD, Department of Anthropology, Graduate College of Arts and Sciences, Union Institute & University, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the thesis, the frontier was seen as a region that created freedom, 'breaking the bonds of custom, offering new experiences *and* calling out new institutions and activities.'[17]

In a recent study, Igor Kopytoff has raised the issue of the 'African frontier.' [18] According to Kopytoff, a frontier perspective on Africa raises two questions: is the idea of the frontier applicable to Africa? And if it is, what sort of frontier is it? Turner's frontier thesis has American characteristics: sweeping like a tidal wave or succession of waves across the American sub–continent. This is like a 'tidal' wave which brings with it settler societies engaged in colonizing an alien land. This tidal wave operates from a base in a mother country whose authority usually follows behind it. As a result of its uniquely American characteristics, this image has tended to restrict the use of the term 'frontier' to similar situations at other times and places.

However, scholars have written extensively about the Canadian, the Australian, and the Russian, the German, the Hungarian, the Latin American and other frontiers around the world.[19] In the African context, the term has been applied most often to the European presence in South Africa,[20] or in connection with colonial penetration elsewhere.[21] We have an occasional study which tends to delve deeply into the African

---

[17] Frederick Jackson Turner first announced his thesis in a paper entitled 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History,' delivered to the American Historical Association in 1893 at World Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

[18]Kopytoff, Igor, (ed.) 'Introduction,' The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

[19] For overviews, see Wyman, Walker D., and Kroeber, Clifton B., (eds.), The Frontier in Perspective, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957; Dietrich, Gerhard, 'The Frontier in Comparative View,' CSSH, 1, 1959: 205-229, and Hennessy, Alistair, The Frontier in Latin American History, London: Edward Arnold, 1978.

[20] Notably De Kiewiet, C. W., A History of South Africa, London: Oxford University Press, 1957; Neumark, S. D., Economic Influences on the South African Frontier, Standford: Standford University Press, 1957; MacMillan, W. M., Bantu, Boer and Briton: The Making of the South African Native Problem, London, 1963 and Lamar, Howard and Thompson, Leonard, (eds.), The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

[21] McIntyre, D. W., The Imperial Frontier in the Tropics, 1865-1873, New York, 1967.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

side of the frontier or a survey of the African historical literature that confines itself to cases of external intrusion.[22]

Yet these studies tend to suggest that the concept can also be applied to Africa. The first study to apply the concept of the term 'Frontier' to Africa is a study by Warren D'Azevedo, a pioneering examination of frontier expansion as a key to the understanding of an African ethnographic region.[23] This study discusses the Liberian–Sierra Leonean area by examining its ethnology as a product of frontier-like conditions. Following this is a study by Igor Kopytoff, in which he attempts a generalization of the frontier perspective to cover Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. He has derived this concept and its application from his experience *in Aghem* (Western Cameroons) where he had carried out some research in 1967.[24] This is an attempt to formulate the idea of an internal and entirely African frontier.[25]

From these studies, the term 'frontier' seems to connote two meanings- that of a region and of a boundary.[26] In anthropology, the term 'frontier' is a metaphorically applied one to any kind of interaction across cultural boundaries. [27] But in most usages, the 'frontier' is a geographical region with peculiar sociological characteristics.[28] However, unlike most historians, anthropologists see frontiers as operating on a more

---

[22] E.g. Isaacman, Allen and Isaacman, Barbara, 'The Prazeros as Transfrontiersmen: A Study in Social and Cultural Change,' IJAHS, 8, #1, 1975.

[23] D'Azevedo, Warren, 'Some Historical Problems in the Delineation of a Central West Atlantic Region,' Annals, New York Academy of Sciences, # 96, Vol. 2, 1962: 512-538.

[24] Kopytoff, Igor, 'Speculations about the Internal African Frontier,' African Studies Association, 1977.

[25] In view of this, it appears that much of the literature on 'expansion' and 'migration' can be recast into a frontier perspective. For this, see Bohannan, Paul, 'The Migration and Expansion of the Tiv,' Africa, 24, 1954: 2-16.

[26] The latter meaning is stressed in Owen Lattimore's Inner Asian Frontiers of China, New York: American Geographical Society, 1940, showing how the cyclical alternation of mutual dominance between imperial China and its nomadic neighbors resulted over the centuries in what might be called an 'oscillating frontier,' quoted from Igor Kopytoff, 1987:4

[27] Bohannan, Paul and Plog, Fred, (eds.), Beyond the Frontier: Social Process and Cultural Change, Garden City , N.Y. : Natural History Press, 1967

[28] Kopytoff, The African frontier, 1987: 6

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

local scale.[29] In the study conducted by Kopytoff and others, the frontier encompasses a narrowly local phenomenon. Thus, the African frontier of our focus consists of politically open areas nestling between organized societies but 'internal' to the larger regions in which they are found - what might be called an 'internal' or 'interstitial frontier,' usually in a region lying between two or more ethnic formations.

In the African case, established societies were surrounded by large tracts of land that were open or unoccupied. According to Kopytoff, put together, these tracts made up a continent–wide interstitial network of thousands of potential local frontiers. Settlers wishing to leave the established societies could move into this internal African frontier and set up their own social order in the midst of what was effectively an institutional vacuum. It was under such frontier conditions that dynamics of African social and political formation were played out over the past centuries.[30]

From the foregoing, we can see two features, often absent on other frontiers, as characteristic of the African frontier: one, the frontier areas were un-policed by the small societies to which the frontiersmen came, and two, in most instances, the frontiersmen were not the advance agents of the mother country, or in other words, they were not there to project the power and hegemony of the mother country. It was not a deliberate expansion of the mother country.[31] Hence, in the African context, the 'frontier' could become a stage for the emergence of numerous new, small-scale, and independent

---

[29] Whitten, Norman E., Black Frontiersmen: A South American Case, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenman, 1974 on Ecuador, or Helms, Mary W., and Franklin O. Loveland, (eds.), Frontier Adaptations in Lower Central America, Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976 on Lower Central America.

[30] Kopytoff, The African frontier, 1987: 4

[31] Unlike the European expansion into the Americas and Australia. The African case was not the projection of the powers of the metropolitan society into new lands.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

political formations, most of which eventually disappeared but some of which grew into larger polities that provided the nucleus for the emergence of new polities.[32]

Most African societies were formed around an initial core–group developed under the relatively un-dramatic conditions of local frontiers. The process has been a continuous phenomenon in the course of African culture history, giving African societies and their shared political culture a frontier cast. As pointed out by Kopytoff, 'this political culture has systematically led to the continuous reproduction of new frontier polities at the peripheries of mature African societies.' Simultaneously, the continuous re-creation of the frontier has maintained an African frontier-conditioned ideology in the political consciousness of African metropolitan societies.[33]

Most American historians agree that the frontier did not create the American national character as Turner strongly implied. Rather, the frontier as an institutional vacuum was a place where the frontiersmen could literally construct a desirable social order. They came to the frontier not with a sociological and political *tabula rasa*, to be shaped by its forests and plains but with a mental model of a good society. [34]

But Turner's original insights can be re-interpreted into a model of a cultural process. With important modifications, then, the frontier perspective can be usefully transferred from America to other frontiers. The main elements of this perspective seem to be: the frontier is permissive rather than determinant; it does not create a type of society and culture but provides instead an institutional vacuum for the unfolding of social processes. Thus, the frontier process in Africa entails the production of frontiersmen, movement in

---

[32]Fairley, Nancy, 'Ideology and State formation: The Ekie of Southern Zaire,' in Kopytoff, The African Frontier, 1987:92.
[33] Kopytoff, African Frontier, 7.
[34] Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

groups, the institutional vacuum, pre-existing social models, adherents as kinsmen and subjects, thus making the 'frontier' a historical process.

It is the observation of Kopytoff that among the frontier formations that survived and grew, most became small-scale polities and remained in that condition for long periods before disappearing, with only a few experiencing in full the potential cycle of growth, expansion, consolidation, further expansion and eventual decay. This full cycle is attested to by the 'shrunken' remains of previously expansive polities that had survived into the colonial period and into our times. Almost all the ancient and famous African kingdoms which had existed for a long period in the past had gone through such'shrinkage,' when they did not disappear altogether. Examples of these are 'empires' such as Kongo, Oyo, Benin, Tukulor, Mali, Ghana, to name only a few. As they shrank, other polities rose at their frontiers and a few expanded at their expense.

This work attempts to develop this perspective further on African societies and African cultural history- the perspective of the 'Frontier' from which we may better understand the formation of these societies and the perpetuation of an African political culture and organization by examining the Yoruba-and Edo-speaking border area of south central Nigeria, using the African kingdom of Owo in southwestern Nigeria as a case study. The sources suggest that Owo kingdom, from its earliest period of development, had exhibited traits of a frontier society. This study, among other issues, focuses on the frontier character of pre-colonial Owo kingdom and tries to explain her development in terms of that frontier experience.

The major research question, then, is how does an African kingdom, part of a large cultural group or nationality but located on the frontier with another cultural group

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

organized under one single powerful kingdom, handle the issues of its existence and benefit from its location? What challenges did it face because of its location, and how did it respond to them and what were (the advantages and disadvantages) - the consequences of her chosen responses? How did these consequences impact her growth as a state, her economic life, her culture, her internal politics, her interaction with her weaker neighbors, her handling of difficulties, etc? What differences did all these import into Owo's character that made her stand somewhat distinct and unique in the general Yoruba mass?

Research Methodology

This is a study of the history of a non-literate African kingdom. Therefore, in accordance with the growing historiography of Africa, much of the source material for this study derives from oral traditions. For this purpose, I have traveled intensively in the research area, collecting oral traditions and taking advantage of oral traditions that have been collected at various times by other researchers and chroniclers since the first years of the 20th century. Some of the collectors of these oral traditions were persons indigenous to the area of study,[35] some of them with deep roots in the culture and traditional politics of the area.[36] Some were British administrators assigned to the area in the era of British rule.[37] Altogether, their collections of the oral traditions of the Owo kingdom constitute a rich body of source material for this study.

Fortunately, also, there has been more recent literature on the area, partly or centrally. Studies of Yorubaland in general [38]and studies of eastern Yorubaland, [39] as well as

[35] Chief Elerewe Adekanye (Elerewe Agba) died in 1927 and bequeathed to his son and his grandson a good account of Owo history to the early times in his Notes.
[36] Chief Matthew Babatunde Ogunbodede, the Ashara of Ijebu -Owo
[37] Mr. J. H. Beeley, was a District Officer in Owo in the 1930s.
[38] Biobaku , S. O., 'The Origin of the Yoruba People,' The Lugard Lectures, 1955; Oyebade, S. A. (ed.) The Transformation of the Nigerian State: essays in honor of Toyin Falola, Africa World Press, Trenton and Asmara, 2003

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

studies of the Benin kingdom,[40] throw much light on the history of Owo. Also, cultural, anthropological and archaeological studies relating to Owo or touching upon Owo have grown since the middle of the 20th century. And, these too have proved very useful to this study. Finally, monographs[41] and research articles done by professional historians have also grown - some on Yorubaland, [42]some on eastern Yorubaland,[43] and even a few (like university theses and dissertations), on parts of Owo's history and cultural life.[44]

I have approached the study of this Yoruba kingdom, not on a narrow historical front or a study of political history, but on a broad front encompassing Owo's political history, political economy, cultural and artistic history. I believe that this interdisciplinary approach makes possible a full understanding of my subject. The theses of Owo's creative genius and wealth creation as a result of her location in the ethnic frontier of Yorubaland and her adroit diplomacy, both in dealing with the Benin kingdom and her weaker neighbors, call for an interdisciplinary approach.

Review of the literature on Owo

Only a few works have directly touched on the history of Owo kingdom and none on her situation as a frontier kingdom. The first mention of Owo in the historical literature is

---

[39] Akintoye, 'The Northeastern Yoruba,' Olukoju, Ayodeji, Apata, Z. O., and Akinwunmi, Olayemi, Northeast Yorubaland: Studies in the History and Culture of a Frontier Zone, Rex Charles Publications with Connell Publications, 1999; Ogundiran, Akinwunmi, 'Of Small things Remembered: Beads, Cowries, and Cultural Translations of the Atlantic Experience in Yorubaland,' IJAHS, Vol. 35, # 2-3, 2002:427-57. Adekambi, T.A. 'Owo in the 19th century,' B. A. Degree Original Essay, Department of History, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 1977. Awe, S.H.A.,'Owo from the Earliest Times,' M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Lagos, Lagos, 1977.

[40] Ryder, A. F. C., The Benin Kingdom and the Europeans, Bradbury, R. E., Benin Studies, Igbafe, P. A., Benin Under British Administration, Egharevba, A Short History.

[41]Ogundiran, A., 'Chronology of Material Culture, and Pathways to the Cultural History of Yoruba –Edo Region, 500 B. C.- A.D.1800,' in Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings, (eds.) Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written, Unearthed, Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003:33-79

[42] Vaughn, Olufemi, Nigerian Chiefs: Traditional Power in Modern Politics, 1890s-1990s, Oxford, 2001

[43] Olukoju, et. al., (eds.) Northeastern Yorubaland

[44] For Owo, Awe, S. H. .A., 'Owo,' Akomolafe, C. O., 'Akoko-Owo Relations,' Adekambi, T. A., 'Owo in the 19th Century,' Isijola, 'The Ojomo Chieftaincy Title,'

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

found in Bowen's journal of 1857.[45] At Ilorin, (a Yoruba town recently taken over by the Muslim Fulani), an informant told Bowen of a place called Aw-waw, (i.e. Owo), to which the informant ascribed a fantastic size and population. In his narrative, Bowen says

I took occasion to ask Nasamu and others whether they knew anything of a town called Iseh and they informed me that it was a very large town on the river Kampe. Six days eastward from Ilorin somewhere in that region the people dig copper from the ground. Six days journey beyond the (River) Kampe is the largest town in Africa, which bears the name Aw-waw; Ilorin, Ilesha, Ibadan and Abeokuta are towns of the second class compared with Aw-waw; and Ijaye, Ogbomoshaw, Offa, Sokoto and Kano of the third class.[46]

According European estimates, the population of Abeokuta in the mid-1850s was between sixty and one hundred thousand (60,000 -100,000). A figure as high as that suggested for Abeokuta at that time is a little suspect. But it is relevant to regard Bowen's observation as indicative of the fact that Owo ranked at that period among the largest towns in this part of Africa, although it might not have been the largest and might not have even been as populous as Abeokuta, a city made up of five towns.

In his four-volume study, Paul Amaury Talbot considers the various theories of migrations from Egypt and the settlement at Ile-Ife. A Government official, Talbot conducted investigations into the social, economic and political life and history of southern Nigerian peoples in 1926 and wrote an ethnographic report on his findings. An amateur anthropologist, his work is an ethnographic survey of the history, ethnology, and language and population data of the Nigerian peoples, including the Yoruba. Talbot said that the Nupe invaded Owo area in the 19th century and some of the Akoko villages in the

[45] Bowen, T.J., Adventures And Missionary Labors In Several Countries Of The Interior Of Africa, From 1849 To 1856, London, Frank Cass, 1968: 197
[46] Bowen, Adventures 198.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

northern sector of Owo, in 1840.[47] Second, he said that Owo was a 'middleman' kingdom, where slave traders from the west could procure slaves, arms and ammunition. For example, he says that an Ibadan war chief, Ayorinde, who had fled his homeland, came to settle in Idoani near Owo in the later part of the 19th century and procured slaves and weapons for the Ibadan army from Benin through Owo.[48]

In 1934, one British Colonial Administrator for Owo, J. H. Beeley, carried out an investigation into the history and the administrative set-up of the old Owo kingdom before the imposition of British rule. According to the records, he only had a brief tenure in Owo- spent only one year there. In his report, Beeley says that Owo was an impregnable fortress in eastern Yorubaland in the middle of the 19th century. [49] Beeley's Intelligence Report is a detailed narrative on the history, economy and social life of Owo people and the neighboring settlements. Beeley was an assistant District Officer for Owo Division in 1934, a post he left at the end of the year. He may have been brought in to write the report of the investigation carried out by other officers as none of those interviewed remembered him personally. He left Owo for other areas of southern Nigeria as he is also the author of other such reports for the Benin Province.[50] The purpose of these investigations was an attempt to understand the history, society and the political arrangements of pre-colonial Africa by the European colonial rulers.

In 1959, Robert Sydney Smith produced a synthesis of the various and divergent traditions of origin of the Yoruba kingdoms. In this work, Smith suggests that the Oduduwa migration might not have been conquest from outside at all as suggested some

[47] Talbot, P.A. Peoples of Southern Nigeria: A Sketch of their History, Ethnology and Languages with an abstract of the 1921 Census, Vol. 1, Historical Notes, 1926: 126.
[48] Talbot, Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Part II...
[49] NAI: Beeley, J.H., ' Intelligence Report on Owo/ Ifon Districts, ' 1934, CSO 26/3/ 29956:3
[50] Intelligence Report on the Ishan people, Benin Division, Benin Province, for example.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

historians but an internal process of state formation in which a dominant group or lineage took control over others as it is clear that the Yoruba have occupied their land for several hundreds of years.[51] Smith posited that Yoruba kingdoms have existed as autonomous states long before the imposition of colonial rule. This was a very important work on the Yoruba people by an outsider in the 1960s when African history was just emerging as a recognized discipline in the universities around the world. Smith says that Owo, situated at the eastern extremity of the Yoruba frontier could be described as 'the eastern palatinate of the Yoruba,' were the Yoruba people united under one kingdom in the pre-colonial era.[52]

Much of Obayemi's work addressed the issues of Yoruba origination and subsequent state formation processes and in their relations with their non-Yoruba speaking neighbors of Edo (Benin), Igala, Nupe, Borgu and others. He mentioned Owo in his discussion of the relationship between the Yoruba and the Edo speaking peoples before 1600,[53] and suggests that the beginnings of the Yoruba and the Edo speaking peoples should be sought in the Niger-Benue confluence rather than Egypt or the Near East. He says that the claim of primacy by Ife among the other Yoruba kingdoms should be re-examined in the light of present discoveries about the antiquity of the smaller states of Northeastern Yorubaland. He based his conclusion on recent archaeological findings and the political arrangement in Kabba, the chief town of the area.[54]

---

[51] Smith, R. S., Kingdoms of the Yoruba, London: Methuen, 1959:97-100
[52] Smith. Kingdoms, 101
[53] Obayemi, Ade, 'The Yoruba- and Edo- Speaking Peoples and their Neighbors Before 1600,' in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, (eds.) History of West Africa, Vol. 1, Longman, 1971:165-207; 'The Sokoto Jihad and the "O-kun" Yoruba: A Review,' JHSN, #9, vol.2, 1978: 61-87.
[54] Obayemi, 'The Yoruba-and Edo- Speaking Peoples, ' 297

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Egharevba, whose work is based largely on oral traditions, traces the origin of the Binis to Ile-Ife, where they had migrated on their way from Egypt via the Sudan, arriving in Benin around 600 AD.[55] The second Benin dynasty began around 1280 AD when Oduduwa sent Oranmiyan to Benin to found a new dynasty. Oranmiyan later left Benin and settled in Oyo where he left a son on the throne as Alaafin. Thus the historical tie is firmly established not only between Ife and Benin but also between Benin and Oyo. This view has however been modified and refuted in some instances. For example, Aimiuwa maintains that Oduduwa was, in fact, one Prince Ekaladerhan who, exiled from Benin, went to settle in Ile-Ife where he became ruler and was later deified.[56]

Egharevba drew attention to the historical connection between Owo and Benin in his book published in 1934.[57] Although the motivation for his work was an attempt to laud the achievements of the Obas (rulers) of Benin, Egharevba mentioned Owo as one of Benin's adversaries and later as one of the tributary states, the relationship between both kingdoms going as far back as the 15th century. Among many of his claims, Egharevba says that 'the Owa of Owo' was the son of the Oba of Benin. Egharevba recalls the presence of Oshogboye, an Owo prince, in the court of the Oba of Benin in the 16th century.[58]

Akintoye [59] mentioned Owo in his study of the expansion of Ibadan and the rise of the Ekitiparapo[60] and in his discussion of the relationship between the Benin kingdom

---

[55] Egharevba, J. U., A Short History of Benin, (4th edition), Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1968: 8
[56] Aimiuwu, O. E., 'Oduduwa,' Nigeria Magazine, # 107/109, 1971:85-90.
[57]Egharevba, J. U., A Short History of Benin, Ibadan, 1960:14.
[58] Egharevba, A Short History, 14.
[59] See his works on Yorubaland: Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840-1893: Ibadan expansion and the rise of the Ekitiparapo, London, 1971; 'The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, 1870-1895', JAH, Vol. 10, #-4, 1969; 'The Northeastern Yoruba Districts and the Benin kingdom', JHSN, Vol. 4, #4, 1969: 539-53; 'Ife's Sad Century: the Nineteenth century in the history of Ife,' Nigeria Magazine, 1980, .to mention a few.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and the Northeastern Yoruba Districts in the precolonial period.[61] These have provoked further discussion since their publication. Although located in eastern Yorubaland and contiguous with the Ekiti and Akoko states, Owo did not experience Ibadan's imperialism in the 19th century. The evidence does not show that Owo was affected by the vagaries of Ibadan hegemony and maybe that was why Owo did not participate in the struggle of the northeastern Yoruba kingdoms to liberate them from under Ibadan in the 19th century.[62] However, Akintoye notes that Owo's nearness to the Benin kingdom had affected the course of her history before the 19th century. Akintoye says that Benin influence is unusually noticeable in Owo because of her proximity to the Edo power center and he suggests that this influence seems to have affected the course of Owo's development. He says that Owo's cultural borrowings from Benin in the precolonial period are noticeable in the chieftaincy titles and regalia of Owo.

Anene is another commentator on the history of Owo–Benin relations in the pre-colonial era. In his discussion of the history of Benin's relations with the many southern Nigerian ethnic groups in the east such as those of the Niger Delta, Ibo and Ibibio peoples in the 19th century, he says that the political relationship between Benin and some northeastern Yoruba towns, including Owo, was not very clear and the power of Benin's arms varied over time. Benin was able to establish some influence on Akure and parts of the Ekiti country but in the case of Owo, Benin's presence and power was not palpable.[63]

---

[60] Akintoye, Revolution and Power Politics, 149.
[61] Akintoye, 'The Northeastern Yoruba Districts.' 543
[62] Ibadan did not attempt a conquest of Owo during Ibadan's imperial period in Yorubaland in the 19th century. See map of the Ibadan Empire between 1840 and 1893.
[63] Anene, J.C., 'Benin, Niger Delta, Ibo and Ibibio Peoples in the Nineteenth Century,' in J.F.A. Ajayi and Ian Espie, (eds.) A Thousand Years of West African History, Ibadan, 1965: 299-313.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Awe discussed the history of Owo from the earliest times to 1900 in his master's degree essay for the Department of History, University of Lagos, 1977.[64] His main point appears to be that there was an interruption in the line of Owo kings from the 14th century to the end of the 16th century. But there is no evidence for this conclusion in Owo oral sources collected by him or any other writer.

In his study, entitled 'Patterns of Inter-Group Relations among the Yoruba in the Pre-colonial Period,' a PhD Dissertation submitted to the Department of History, University of Ife, Ile -Ife, 1977, Gabriel Ishola Olomola mentioned Owo in passing - her traditions of origin and her diplomatic practices - as examples of the cultural traits of the eastern Yoruba people.

Akomolafe's work covers the period before the imposition of British colonial rule and after.[65] Quoting Abraham Bayode of Ehin-Ogbe quarter, Owo, Akomolafe says that there was a close relationship between the Akoko and Owo and this relationship was mutually beneficial and reciprocal. This claim is only accurate in part because it was a relationship between two unequal partners. Akomolafe justifies the severance of some Akoko towns and villages from the old Owo Division by the British Government under the indirect rule system. He maintains that no Akoko town or village had ever been under the suzerainty of Owo in the past and therefore Owo's attempt at subordinating these settlements to herself during the colonial period has no historical basis. He concludes by saying that the close relationship between Owo and her Akoko neighbors was based on mutual respect and reciprocity. It was not a tributary relationship emanating from Owo's conquest of the

[64] Awe, Solomon Harrison Ajayi, 'A History of Owo from the earliest times,' M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria, 1977.
[65]Akomolafe, C.O., 'Akoko Under British Colonial rule,' M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Ife, Nigeria, 1980.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Akoko people. But this position is contradicted by Beeley, a British colonial District Officer for Owo, who says in his Intelligence Report that the Royal Niger Company paid the Olowo some stipends for the loss of his dependencies in Akoko (up to 1925).[66] Other sources indicate that Owo forces entered the Akoko country to assert her authority several times from the reign of Ajagbusi-Ekun in c1719 to the reign of his son, Ajaka, c1760-c1780.[67]

The most important of the early writings on the history of the Yoruba people is Samuel Johnson's work entitled The History of the Yorubas. Johnson did not mention Owo in any capacity either as one of the primary kingdoms, founded by the sons of Oduduwa, or as one of the secondary kingdoms founded by the older states later on. However, Johnson says that when the purveyor of the Ifa oracle, Agbonniregun or Setilu, left his home in the Nupe country in the pre-historic times, he came to Owo and from Owo he went to Ile-Ife as he continued to proselytize the cult of the Ifa oracle in Yorubaland.[68]

From the foregoing we can see that Owo has been mentioned in several places in the literature but those who have done that have only discussed [69] some aspects of Owo history and have only done so in connection with their discussion of other issues in Yoruba history and in passing, as they did not set out to write the history of Owo. For

---

[66] Beeley, Intelligence Report, Adekambi, 1976, Awe, 1977

[67] Ashara, The History, 1952; Awe, 'Owo Kingdom,' 1977 and Akomolafe, 'Akoko,' 1980.

[68] Johnson, The History of the Yorubas, 20

[69] Smith, R.S., Kingdoms of the Yoruba, (3rd edn.), Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988; 'Yoruba Armament,' JAH, V11, 1, 1967: 87-95; 'A Note on the Two Shirts of Mail in the Palace at Owo in Southwestern Nigeria,' Odu, 3rd series, # 5, 1971; Egharevba, J. U., A Short History of Benin, 4th ed. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1960; Akintoye, Revolution and Power, 1971. 'The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, 1870-1895,' JAH, Vol. 10, #-4, 1969; 'The Northeastern Yoruba Districts, Eyo, Ekpo, 'Treasures from Nigeria,' Expedition, # 6, 1972; Isichei, Elizabeth, A History of Nigeria, Longman, 1980; Obayemi, Ade, 'The Yoruba-and Edo-Speaking Peoples,' Atanda, J.A., An Introduction to Yoruba History, Ibadan, 1980 and Poynor, 1978:40-45.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

example, Ryder and Bradbury only mentioned Owo in passing in their works. Ryder says that Owo was part of the Benin Empire that extended to eastern Yorubaland in the 15th century and Bradbury says that Benin conquered Owo, one of the Yoruba states and that Owo was intermittently part of the Benin Empire before the 19th century. [70]

Recently, attempts have been made to shed light on pre-colonial Owo through the arts. In 1951, William Fagg suggested that Owo might hold a place in West African art history as important as that of Ife or Benin.[71] Owo art forms have provoked discussion and suggest links with both Ife and Benin. Fagg also said that Owo ivories were long traded to Benin and that a number of the Benin ivories in European museums are, in fact, Owo ivories.[72] Willett and Cordwell say that figures used in the Ako funeral effigies in Owo suggest similar uses for the ancient brass heads found at Ife. [73] Fagg and Willett note that the art and sculpture of Owo may be connected with those of Ife and Benin.[74] Willett, Abiodun and Robin Poynor have written on several aspects of Owo's art history: Edo influence on Owo's art form, egungun (masque), textiles and rites of passage (Ako).[75]

Archeological evidence, supplied by Ekpo Eyo, tends to confirm the relationship between Owo and Ife on the one hand, and between Owo and Benin on the other. [76] In 1972, Eyo discovered eleven terracotta heads at Igbo-laja at the site of his excavations in

---

[70] Ryder, A.F.C., Benin and the Europeans, London, 1969: 202-211; Bradbury, R.E., Benin Studies, London, 1976:36.
[71] Fagg, William, 'Tribal Sculpture and the Festival of Britain - the Art Style of Owo,' Man, 1951: 51, 73-76;
[72] Fagg, William, Nigerian Images, London: Lund Humphries, 1963.
[73] Cordwell, Justine, 'Naturalism and Stylization in Yoruba Art,' Magazine of Art, 46, 1953: 223-224; Frank Willett, 'On the Funeral Effigies of Owo and Benin and the Interpretation of the Life-Size Bronze Heads from Ife, Nigeria,' Man, 1, (March, 1966) : 34-35
[74] Fagg, W. B., 'Tribal Sculpture,' J. Cordwell, 'Naturalism and Stylization in Yoruba Art', Magazine of Art, 46, 1953: 220-25. Willett, Frank, 'On the Funeral Effigies of Owo,'
[75] Poynor, R. 'Edo Influence,'
[76] Eyo, Ekpo, 'Recent Excavations at Ife and Owo and their implications for Ife, Owo and Benin Studies,' Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 1974.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Egbenren Street, Owo. He found that these were executed in the Ife classical style. A detailed comparison of the material excavated at Owo with some Ife material has already been carried out. This comparison appears to reflect some close contact with Ife in the past before the Benin influence which had become apparent since the early 15th century. If any of those eleven heads, out of twenty excavated at Owo, were found in Ife, they would certainly not be out of place there. Their presence in Owo may therefore be regarded as demonstrating some kind of interactions, which in this case, may be linked with the Ife origin of Owo.

Eyo has asked one poignant question, however. 'Were the Ife style heads in Owo made there or were they made at Ife and later brought to Owo?' He answered this rhetorical question himself by saying that only an analysis of the chemical contents of the clay can determine this. He says further that it seems plausible, however, to think that the Owo people might have migrated from Ife, where they claim to have originated and might have brought with them a sculptor who was an expert on terracotta molding or that the Ife style objects were either brought or sent from Ife. In either case, Eyo is of the opinion that it does indicate the close connection between the kingdoms of Owo and Ife in the early period before the impact of the Benin kingdom on the Owo kingdom and eastern Yoruba area as a whole.

In a book written by Akindoju and Oladunjoye on the history of Idanre, the authors tried to show the antiquity of Idanre, a small kingdom in southwestern Nigeria, near Ondo. The authors claim that Idanre is older than Ife. They also claim that Idanre defeated Oyo in a war; but this is not recorded anywhere else. According to the authors, the war was fought between Idanre and Oyo over the possession of the ancient crown of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Idanre, which they claim must be the real crown of Oduduwa. The authors contend that all Yoruba kingdoms emanated from Idanre, as it is the oldest kingdom of all, hence the ruler of Idanre is also known as Olofin, the other name of Oduduwa. Akindoju and Oladunjoye mention the beginnings of Owo in this history of Idanre. They claim that the Owo people might have originated from Idanre.[77] Their evidence is the Igogo festival and the articles used in it.

A prominent literate citizen of Owo, Chief M.B. Ashara, did the most serious collection and write-up of Owo oral traditions. In 1949, Sir Olateru Olagbegi, the then Olowo of Owo and his Inner Council assigned Chief Ashara the duty of collecting the oral traditions of Owo. After collecting different versions of the history of Owo from the elders, Chief Ashara accepted the commission to write an authorized version of that history. A collation of the versions appeared in 1951 as The History of Owo. Chief J.U. Egharevba had published A Short History of Benin in 1934. [78]It is probable that Chief Ashara consulted this work.

Ashara's The History is the only comprehensive, written history on the kingdom of Owo. The book deals with the reigns of some mythical Olowos in the early periods, and the activities of the later Olowos in terms of their wars and the creation of chieftaincy titles. One of the kings is even cited as the inventor of the oil lamp.[79] The author does not show the sources upon which his narrative is based and he failed to deal with each reign in detail. Although he assigned dates to the events he narrated, there is no evidence to show that these dates are in order or accurate. For example, he assigned the beginnings of Owo kingdom to c1100AD but we do not know how he arrived at this date. While recent

[77] Akindoju, S.A. and D.O. Olagundoye, History of Idanre, Ibadan, 1962.
[78] Reprinted in 1960 by the Ibadan University Press.
[79] 'Ogusho,' loosely translated, 'naked lamp.'

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

radio carbon dating [80]has pointed to the possibility that the Yoruba people might have lived in Ife around the 12th century, it is yet to be ascertained that Owo people were among the first wave of migrants who left the city of Ile-Ife at that time to establish the different dynasties, which now dot the Yoruba landscape.

However, Chief Ashara has succeeded in putting down on paper the basic outlines of the history of Owo. There are three areas in which this work is of importance. First, he assigned dates to the important events, such as the reigns of the Olowo (traditional rulers of Owo) and the length of such reigns. How he arrived at this and earlier dates from c1100 to c1334 and later is, however, not clear. The second area where Ashara's contribution to the history of Owo is appreciable concerns his epochal divisions of the history of Owo into the three dynasties or periods: the first period, that of the Elefene of Efene, the aboriginal elements of the place now known as Owo; the second period, that of the descendants of Ojugbelu, the founder of the kingdom; and the third period and present generation, the descendants of Adedipe, (also known as Elewu-Okun: 'the owner of the beaded gown'), who became the Olowo of Owo in c1781AD. Ashara did not give a basis or reasons for these divisions.

The third area where Ashara's work is commendable is in his inclusion of some information on the socio-economic and cultural aspects of Owo life in the precolonial period in the appendix. He not only dealt with the political aspects of Owo history, he

[80] Willett. Frank, 'Ife and its Archaeology,' JAH, 1960, 231-4, Conan, Graham, The Archaeology of Benin, Oxford, 1975; Shaw, Thurstan, 'The Prehistory of West Africa, 'in J. F. A, Ajayi and Michael Crowder, History of West Africa, Vol.1, (2nd. Edn.), 1976: 33-71.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

also dwelt, to some extent, on the rituals, ceremonies and the occupational practices of the people.

Although Ashara's work is only a collection of Owo traditions by a man who did not have any formal training in historical reconstruction, it nevertheless provides a base from which we can start serious scientific historical reconstruction. His weaknesses are obvious: he does not tell us who his sources were, what considerations and calculations led him to his dates and periods, failed to go beyond Owo to ask questions in neighboring kingdoms and towns, failed to use as source material any physical products of Owo's culture - for example, the old family compounds, palaces, shrines, collection of crowns and regalia in the palace which were still in existence in his time. Nevertheless, it is obvious that, as far as it goes, his collection of the Owo oral traditions is painstaking and thorough; quite a number of better-educated persons have gone through the field after him, and none has added much significant new information. Though he was an Owo patriot, other writers on the issue have generally held up his account of relations with other kingdoms. For example, his accounts tend to correspond with those of Egharevba of Benin and Monsignor Oguntuyi of Ado-Ekiti.

The resulting work presented above is a compilation of the history of Owo, derived from diverse oral and written historical accounts and a few university students' dissertations and theses,[81] but there is yet no systematic study of the history of Owo. Akintoye, writing in 1969, says that the overall impression is that the people of the area under study (i.e. the northeastern districts of Yorubaland, which includes Owo) 'Are the

[81] Adekambi, T.A., 'Owo in the 19th Century,' Original BA thesis, Department of History, University of Ibadan, 1976; Awe, S.H. A., 'A History of Owo from the Earliest Times,' MA thesis, submitted to the Department of History, University of Lagos, 1977; Akomolafe, C.O., 'Owo-Akoko Relations Under Colonial Rule,' MA thesis submitted to the Department of History, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, 1980.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

products of a hodge-podge of peoples who over the centuries, came and mixed together in an area, which seems to represent a meeting ground for diverse peoples and cultures from the west, east and north.[82]

Like Akintoye, other commentators[83] have also had cause to discuss some aspects of Owo history. In some cases, these authors mentioned Owo as the largest Yoruba state in the east and others have mentioned Owo because of her pre-colonial connection with the Benin kingdom. For example, Bradbury has emphasized the Benin factor in the history of precolonial eastern Yorubaland. He explains this in terms of the expansionist program of Benin and its impact on the surrounding polities, including Owo. According to Bradbury: 'It is impossible at the present time to determine the extent of the Benin empire at any particular period in the past; the frontiers were continually expanding and contracting as new conquests were made and as vassals on the borders rebelled and were conquered.... On the northeast, Akure, the Ekiti country, Owo and much of what is now Owo Division were, though intermittently, tributary to Benin; the re-conquest of this area was attempted, with some success during the early part of the 19th century. It appears from the Edo traditions that Edo influence in this area dates back to the late 16th century.' [84]

After he had recounted the achievements of Ewuare, (an oba of Benin in the 15th century), which included internal reforms and external conquests, Ryder notes that:

'He (i.e. Ewuare) can indeed be regarded as the founder of Benin's reputation as a formidable military power, and of the empire. Under his command the Benin armies extended their conquests beyond the Edo regions, subjugating many towns and villages

---

[82] Akintoye, S.A., 'The Northeastern Yoruba Districts and the Benin Kingdom,' JHSN, vol. iv, # 4, 1969: 543.
[83] Bowen, Adventures, 1856: 197; Fagg, 1951, 73-6; Willett, 1966, 31-5; Smith, Kingdoms, 1969, 70-1; Obayemi, 'Yoruba and Edo, 1971,' 205- 37; Eyo, 'Treasures,' 1972; Abiodun, 1976, 'Ako,' 4-20, Poynor, 'Edo Influences,' 1976: 62-3 and Isichei, A History, 1980, 68.
[84] Bradbury, R.E., Benin Studies, London, 1970: 21-2.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of Ekiti, Ikare, Afenmai and the western Ibo, among them the important towns of Owo and Akure.' [85]

Akintoye complements Bradbury and Ryder by looking at the imperial activities of Benin in eastern Yorubaland: how Benin succeeded in establishing her rule or dominance in the area, how she treated the subject peoples and how she was overthrown by the coming of the British in 1897.[86]

Other scholars[87] have discussed Owo history as it relates to the general history of Yorubaland and in terms of state formation processes. Atanda concludes that the nature of the Owo-Benin relations in the pre-colonial period remains unclear.[88]

Akintoye has dwelt more extensively on some aspects of the precolonial history of Owo, particularly her relationship with the Benin kingdom than any other scholar. According to him, Benin had an overwhelming political, economic and cultural control over Owo until 1897. He says, without any qualifications, that

'...Owo appears to have been very closely controlled from Benin.' [89]

Akintoye gives his reason for Benin's total control of Owo by saying that this

'... was probably due partly to Owo's comparative nearness to Benin and her location along the main routes.'

He adds that in practical terms '...The Olowo (i.e. the traditional ruler of Owo) sent tributes to Benin annually through a resident official and the Owo people had to pay to the Oba of Benin obeisance customarily due to an oba. For instance, in most parts of the Yoruba country any

---

[85] Ryder, A.F.C., Benin and the Europeans, London, 1969: 11.
[86] Akintoye, 'The Northeastern Yoruba Districts..'
[87] Smith, Kingdoms, Obayemi, 'The Yoruba -and Edo–Speaking Peoples, ' and Atanda, J.A., An Introduction to Yoruba History, Ibadan, 1980, 12-14
[88] Atanda, An Introduction, 14
[89] Akintoye, 'The Northeastern Yoruba Districts,' 550

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

hunter who killed a tiger or leopard had to give it up to his oba. In Owo, any hunter who killed either of these animals had to carry it to the Oba of Benin.' Akintoye adds that

'Owo was made to surrender its princes as hostages in the Benin court. Many Owo rulers therefore had Benin education and were responsible for introducing Benin culture to Owo. This is why Owo shows much stronger evidence of Benin cultural influence, especially in palace ritual and manners, than other towns in the area under study.' [90]

However, in another dimension, Akintoye says that the clearest tradition of resistance to Benin domination is found at Owo. He attributes this to the fact that

'Owo was a considerably powerful kingdom with expansionist ambitions of its own in neighboring Akoko.'

But Akintoye did not stop there, as he wanted to show that Benin dominance of Owo was complete and continued to the establishment of British rule in 1897. In doing this, he referred to the story of Oshogboye's presence in the Benin court in the 17th century or thereabouts. He says:

'Probably in the 17th century, an Owo prince named Osogboye, who had lived as a hostage and *omo-ada* (sword bearer) in the Benin court organized his people for resistance against Benin. Following the example of Benin City, he had a great moat dug round Owo, and drilled his people into an efficient fighting force. Thus prepared, Owo crushed a powerful Benin army outside the walls and appears to have held out for some time thereafter.'[91] Akintoye then concluded that

'After Osogboye, however, Benin control seems to have been re-established for some time.'

---

[90] Akintoye, 'The Northeastern' 547
[91] Ibid, 'The Northeastern' 549

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Growing literature on the Yoruba frontier

Biobaku appears to be the first historian to pay any attention to the history of the Yoruba people in the periphery when in 1957 he wrote the history of the Egba and their neighbors. [92] In this study, he dealt with the relationship between the Egba and their neighbors of Dahomey, and discussed the problems encountered by the Egba people of Abeokuta and the Egbado people of Ilaro because of their location at the western Yoruba frontier near Dahomey. In the early years of the 19th century, after Dahomey had freed itself from the imperial yoke of the Oyo Empire, she attacked this Yoruba frontier in a series of raids.

Following Biobaku's study, Akinjogbin wrote on the relationship between Dahomey and her neighbors in the Yoruba area further west.[93] In this study, completed in 1967, Akinjogbin shows how Dahomey had encroached on the western Yoruba towns of Ketu, Ohori, Ifonyin and Itakete and her dominance of these smaller Yoruba settlements before the imposition of French colonial rule. Asiwaju has also discussed the experiences of these western Yoruba districts in his comparative study of the British and French modes of colonial administration in the western frontier area.[94]

In his study of the relationship between the Eastern Yoruba Districts and their neighbor, the Edo kingdom of Benin, Akintoye discusses the mode of the interaction among these groups and the impact of such interactions exhibited in their claims of kinship, kingship connections, artistic and social ties.[95]

---

[92] Biobaku, S.O., The Egba and Their Neighbors, 1842-1872, Oxford, 1957
[93] Akinjogbin, I. A., Dahomey and its Neighbors, 1708-1818, Thomas Hutchinson, 1969.
[94] Asiwaju, A. I., Western Yorubaland under European Rule, 1889-1945: A Comparison of British and French Imperialism, Longman, 1976, chapter one.
[95] Akintoye, S.A.,' The Northeastern Yoruba Districts and the Benin Kingdom,' JHSN, 1969

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In the 1970s, Ade Obayemi wrote about the relationship between the Yoruba and the Edo speaking peoples and their neighbors and said that one common culture pervaded the region up to the beginning of the 17th century and that because of their close location, they might have originated from the same source.[96] Ryder had concluded earlier that the Yoruba and the other ethnic nationalities of the area may have originated from the 'Beni,' a small ethnic group in the Nupe country.[97]

In his study of the rise and collapse of the Oyo Empire, Law says that the Oyo kingdom, a frontier Yoruba state, had its beginnings as a vassal of the Nupe.[98] He says that the town of Oyo may have, in fact, been established by one Momo of Ogodo, a town in the Nupe country. He also discussed the subsequent interactions between the old Oyo Empire and their Borgu and Nupe neighbors. He says that the eventual fall of the Oyo Empire can be traced partly to the activities of its neighbors, the Borgu and Nupe, during the early part of the 19th century as a result of the Islamic jihadist movements from the north.

In 1980, Adediran wrote an article on Idaisa, a frontier Yoruba state to the west[99]and carried out a major study of the origins of the western Yoruba states and their frontier experiences.[100] He says that some of these states were totally destroyed while the rest were militarily dominated by Dahomey before the 19th century. Adediran has also written on the frontier experiences of the eastern Yoruba states, their state formation processes and subsequent development. But in contrast to what obtained in the west, Adediran

---

[96] Obayemi, Ade, 'The Yoruba- and Edo- Speaking Peoples and their Neighbors before 1600,' in J.F.Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, (eds.), History of West Africa (2nd ed.) London, 1976: 136- 201.
[97] Ryder, A. F. C., 'A Reconsideration of the Ife-Benin Relationship,' JAH, # V1, No. 1, 1965.
[98] Law, Robin, The Oyo Empire, c1600-c1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade, Oxford, 1991.
[99] Adediran, 'Biodun, 'Idaisa: the Making of a Frontier Yoruba State,' CEA, 93, XX1V-1, 1984: 71-85.
[100] Adediran, 'Biodun, The Frontier States of Western Yorubaland, c1600-1889: State Formation and Political Growth in an Ethnic Frontier Zone, Ibadan, 1994.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

suggests that the eastern Yoruba districts were under a pleasant imperialism in their interaction with the Benin kingdom in the pre-colonial period. [101] He says in another article that because of their nearness to the Benin kingdom and her cultural impact, these eastern Yoruba peoples, including Owo, have two identities –one Yoruba and the other Edo, and because of the confusion this experience has caused, they are now in search of an identity.[102]

In a recent article, Olukoju discusses the Nupe siege of Oka, a small town in the Akoko country and said that Oka had to hide on top of rugged hills for a considerable length of time to escape the Nupe raids on Oka. [103] Olukoju has also edited a collection of some monographs on the northeast Yoruba which deals with a variety of issues concerning the eastern Yoruba frontier zone.[104]

Aribidesi Usman writes on the Igbomina as a frontier Yoruba area and their experiences in the hands of the Nupe.[105] This article examines the political dimensions of warfare and the context of regional center–periphery socio-political relationships, with an emphasis on a political frontier in northern Yorubaland, the Igbomina region. In this article, Aribidesi Usman says that Igbomina was adversely affected by the challenges of political insecurity from the 16th through the 19th centuries because of its location on the frontier of two hegemonic and expansionist political centers of Oyo and the Nupe. He

---

[101] Adediran, 'Biodun, 'Pleasant Imperialism: Conjectures on Benin Hegemony in Eastern Yorubaland,' African Notes, Vol. 15, 1991: 83-95.

[102] Adediran, Biodun, 'In Search of Identity? The Eastern Yoruba and the Oduduwa Traditions,' Odu, 36, 1989: 114-136.

[103] Olukoju, Ayodeji, 'Siege of Oka, 1878-1884: A Study in the resistance to Nupe Militarism in Northeast Yorubaland', in T. Falola, (ed.), Warfare, Diplomacy and Society in Nigeria, Madison, 1992.

[104] Olukoju, Ayodeji, Apata, Z. O., Akinwunmi, Olayemi, (eds.) Northeast Yorubaland: Studies in the History and Culture of a Frontier Zone, Rex Charles Publication in association with Connell Publications, 1999.

[105] Usman, Aribidesi, 'Crisis and Catastrophe: Warfare in Pre-colonial Northern Yoruba,' in Akinwunmi Ogundiran, (ed.), Pre-colonial Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Toyin Falola, Africa World Press, Trenton and Asmara, 2005: 361-382.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

describes Igbomina's experience as catastrophic because of the bloodshed and oppression of the Igbomina by the Nupe.

In a recent study of the relationship between the Yoruba and the Nupe, [106] Sha'aba Jimada says that issues of origin and historical development are very important in the study of Nigerian history. In that context, he discusses the issue of inter-group relationships among ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, with a focus on the role of the Nupe in the origin and evolution of the Yoruba. In advancing his thesis, the author used evidences from interactions between the Yoruba at the frontier with their neighbors. This study challenges the misconception about the spontaneous emergence of the Yoruba people as opposed to the fact that the Yoruba may have evolved from a neighboring ethnic nationality such as the Nupe. He said that the Yoruba at the periphery had a lot in common with their neighbors. He concludes that the Yoruba and the Nupe peoples were originally related and that they shared some commonalities which show that the Yoruba people may have originated from the Nupe.

Although these scholars have contributed to our knowledge of some aspects of Yoruba history, none of them has dealt with Owo and where they mention Owo, such writings are either not detailed enough as some of them just glossed over the historical developments and changes of the pre-colonial period, or are inaccurate in some parts. None of them has touched on the history of Owo as a frontier Yoruba kingdom. The issues they raise call for more extensive elaboration, analysis and discussion. In addition, we need to know more of the predicament of Owo as she dealt with issues emanating

[106] Jimada, Idris Sha'aba , The Nupe and the Origins and Evolution of the Yoruba, c1275-c1897, Abdulahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, Zaria, Nigeria, 2005

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

from her location near the Benin kingdom. This study begins to develop such clarifications and bridge some of the gaps in Owo history.

Organization of this work

This work is divided into eleven chapters with each chapter dealing specifically with issues discussed in the body of the work relating to events in the history of Owo in particular and Yorubaland in general. Chapter one is an introduction to the study and its focus is on the research question, the methodology used, the review of the literature on Owo and the emerging literature on the Yoruba frontier. Chapter two is a brief introduction of the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria, West Africa. The third chapter deals with the foundations of Owo society and the origins of the people making up the Owo community. The fourth chapter is concerned with the early history of the Owo kingdom. This is followed by the fifth chapter, which is a sketch of the political economy of early Owo. Chapter six discusses the Owo kingdom and Benin expansion. Chapter seven is concerned with a discussion of Oshogboye's legacy, the beginnings of the strong frontier Yoruba kingdom of Owo and her relations with her neighbors. Chapter eight discusses developments in 19th century Owo society and her re-integration into the Yoruba homeland as a result of the Yoruba wars. Chapter nine is a summary of the traditional government of Owo kingdom in c1900, long before the onset of British rule in the first decade of the 20th century. Chapter ten is a brief discussion of the history of Owo under colonial rule and in independent Nigeria and chapter eleven concludes the study.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER TWO

Introducing the Yoruba People

In this study of the history of the Owo kingdom, it is important that we begin with a brief introduction of the Yoruba people of which the Owo subgroup is an integral part. In doing that, we begin with a description of the Yoruba people, their homeland, its topography and other geographical features. The homeland of the Yoruba people is a sprawling expanse of territory in Southwestern Nigeria and the eastern half of the neighboring Benin Republic (formerly Dahomey) of West Africa. As a result of the legacy of the Atlantic Slave trade, some descendants of the Yoruba people are found today in Brazil, Cuba and other parts of the Americas.[1]The Yoruba homeland consists of the territories of the Yoruba sub-groups of Awori, Ijebu and Egba and Egbado (Yewa) in the west, Oyo, Ife and the Igbomina in the north and central, the Ijesha, Ekiti, Ondo, Owo, Akoko, Ikale and Ilaje in the east and southeast, and the Iyagba, Ijumu, Ikiri, Owe, Oworo and Abunu in the far northeast near the River Niger in present Kogi State.[2] In modern Nigeria, the Yoruba people occupy the Oyo, Ogun, Lagos, Oshun, Ondo and Ekiti states and substantial parts of Kwara, Kogi, Edo and Delta states. [3]

The eastern section of the Yoruba homeland, the location of the present study, exhibits some unique physical features.[4] The landscape is gently to strongly undulating and descends gradually from the hills of the Ekiti, Kabba, Akoko and Ijesha countries in the north to the low-lying areas of the Ondo, Ikale and Ilaje countries in the south. The Ilaje

---

[1] Bascom, W.R., 'The Yoruba in Cuba', Nigeria Magazine, # 37, 1951; Verger, P., 'Nigeria, Brazil and Cuba', Nigeria: A Special independence Issue of the Nigeria Magazine, October 1960.
[2] Akintoye, Revolution and Power Politics, 1971: 5.
[3] The Itsekiri people are cousins of the Yoruba and the history of Ode Itsekiri (Warri) relates the migration of Owo and Ondo people to this water-side settlement in the pre-colonial period.
[4] Buchanan, K. M. and J.C. Pugh, Land and People in Nigeria, London, 1962: 12-20.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

country in modern Ondo state lies along the shore of the Atlantic Ocean and is dissected by creeks and lagoons. Many steep-sided residual hills and ridges feature in the landscape of the Ekiti, Ijesha, Akoko, Kabba and Kogi territories. A quartz ridge dominates the relief of eastern and northern Ijesha and of western Ekiti. It runs north to south from the Igbajo area through Imesi-Ile and Effon-Alaye to Ipetu–Ijesha, reaching its highest point near Erin-Oke, east of Ilesha, where it rises to about two thousand and four hundred feet.[5] There are numerous steep-sided dome-shaped inselbergs[6] which rise abruptly from the surrounding country, showing bare rock faces which dominate the relief features of the areas of Idanre, of northern Ondo, Akure, Ikere and Ado, of southern and central Ekiti, and Oka and Ikare and of the Akoko countries. The Agbaja plateau runs from the northwest to the southeast in the extreme northeast of Yorubaland terminating near Lokoja at the confluence of the Rivers Niger and Benue. These areas are hilly and rugged because of the presence of inselbergs. The Akoko territories in the far northeastern part of eastern Yorubaland is the craggiest, the hills merging into the Kukuruku hills of the Afenmai region of modern Edo state. [7]

The landscape is full of hills and granite rocks; hence the Yoruba people in this area are fondly described as people of the hills, *ara-oke*, by the other Yoruba people to the west.[8] Many of the hills are very high and bare of forests. In the other areas in the eastern Yoruba country, the hills have forest covers. There is a stretch of hills which forms a

---

[5] Akintoye, S. A., Revolution and Power Politics 1971:1

[6] An inselberg is an island mountain, an isolated hill or mountain which rises abruptly from its surroundings, typically a plain in a hot, dry region. 1960. B.W. Sparks, *Geomophol.* xi. 257. Many African landscapes consist of a series of isolated steep-sided inselbergs rising from an almost flat plain. The Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd edition, vol. V11, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989:1019.

[7] Akintoye, Revolution and Power, 2

[8] The Lagos Yoruba epithet of 'Ara oke a je esin,' meaning, 'The hill country people who eat the flesh of horses,' used in describing the eastern Yoruba people may have stemmed from these hills, though not many horses survive here because of the menace of the sleeping sickness, trypasonomiasis, caused by tsetse flies..

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

plateau from the Ondo area stretching to the Niger River known as the West African plateau. The rugged landscape supplies a watershed that leads to the formation of many small rivers. All the rivers originate from the hills of the Ondo, Ekiti and Akoko areas, some flowing southwards towards the Atlantic Ocean while others flow towards the east to the River Niger. These rivers include the Osun, Ogbesse, Owena, Oni, Osse, Ebba and Oyi. Other smaller ones include the Omusua, Elemi, Ala, Osi, Uwesse, etc, all flowing into the Osse River. The Oyi and the Ebba might be mentioned among the rivers flowing to the River Niger. Of those flowing southwards, the most important are the Oni, Oluwa and Ominla, its tributary, Siluko and Owena, its tributary, and Osse and Ogbesse, its tributary.[9]

The vegetation of the low-lying parts, except for its far northern reaches, is high forest punctuated by patches of cultivated land around the main towns and villages. Products cultivated include yams, maize, cassava, okra, vegetables, plantain, peppers and cotton. Usually, the ridges and hills, whenever the bare rock domes are absent, are very thickly wooded. In the northeastern parts of Ekiti as well as most of Akoko and Kabba, comparatively open woodland savannah predominates but even in such areas, scattered patches of rain forest are found. The products cultivated here include beans, millet, spices and cassava.

Commercially, from the 16th to the 18th century, Oyo in the northwest was the most important market in the more open country to the north and west of Yorubaland, while in the east and south, the Benin kingdom was the most important market in the forest countries in eastern Yorubaland and in the Edo country to the further east and south. The

[9] Olomola, Gabriel Ishola, 'Patterns of Inter Group Relations among the Yoruba in the Pre-colonial period, 'PhD Dissertation, University of Ife, Ile -Ife, 1977: 15

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

neighboring frontier areas of Owo, Akoko, southern Ekiti and Ondo in eastern Yorubaland form part of this market area. Because the two areas of Oyo and Benin spheres of commercial influence dovetail and overlap, their trade formed a continuum of the southern extension of the trans-Saharan trade network, which passed through the Niger to Oyo. From Oyo, one arm of this trade route went southwards through Upper Ogun to Porto Novo in the Adja country of modern Benin Republic. The other arm went from Oyo to Nupe westwards through Kaiama to Borgu and Gonja. A third route went southeast through Ekiti and Owo to Benin. [10] In the period before the arrival of the Portuguese in the later part of the 15th century, this last route was the most important channel by which copper and other luxury goods from North Africa and the Sudan came to Benin.[11]

Owo traditions testify to commerce between Benin and the northeastern Yoruba country from the early times. Okeluse, a township in the southern border of Owo kingdom, appears to have developed early as a main entrepot of this trade in eastern Yorubaland.[12] At Okeluse, the route from Benin divided into two with one arm going to the Akoko, Iyagba and the Nupe countries while the other arm went to Akure, Ilesha, Ife and the Ife trading center at Apomu.[13] In the 17th and 18th centuries, Ife, Ilesha, Ekiti, Oyo, Benin and Ijebu traders met at Apomu. The other route through Owo went to Akure and from there to the Ekiti, Igbomina, and Oyo and Nupe countries. The route that went through Akure continued to Igbara-Oke, Egosi and Otun in Ekiti. Owo had a direct trade

[10] J.F. Ade Ajayi, 'The Aftermath of the fall of Oyo, ' in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, (eds.) History of West Africa, vol. 2, Longman, 1976: 129-166.
[11] Bovill, E. W., The Golden Trade of the Moors, London, 1968, (originally published in 1933 as the Caravans of the Old Sahara); Mabogunje, A. L., Urbanization in Nigeria, London and New York, 1963, ch. iv.
[12] S.A. Akintoye, 'The Northeastern Yoruba Districts and the Benin kingdom, ' JHSN, 1969: 432
[13] Akintoye, ' The Northeastern Districts'

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

route through Ikare in the Akoko country to the Nupe and Igbirra countries on the Rivers Niger and Benue. Before the 19th century, Owo was a very important emporium because Owo was a safe haven for traders from both the east and the west.[14]

By the end of the 19th century, Lagos had emerged as the main outlet for the Yoruba hinterland where commercial and other interests converged, because of British colonial activities there. Today the south-western areas of Yorubaland are markedly more densely populated and economically more advanced than the south-east.[15] Before the 19th century and particularly between the 16th and the 19th centuries, it appears that the reverse, to some extent, was the case, the southwest being less densely populated than the southeast and the northeast.

Before the 19th century, the highest population centers existed in the northwest. That is where great cities like Oyo–Ile (Home Oyo) and Igboho were found. Generally, northern Yorubaland was more thickly populated than the southern and the southeastern region more than the southwestern areas. The collapse of the Oyo Empire in c1835 changed all that.[16] As a result of the collapse of the old Oyo Empire and the desertion of the city of Oyo-Ile in the early part of the 19th century,[17] massive migrations from the northwest southwards resulted in a build-up of populations in the Yoruba western midlands, resulting in the western Yoruba country being more populated today than the eastern Yoruba area.[18]

---

[14] Owo was more secure and safe from Benin's sudden attacks from the east, at least from the early part of the 17th century. During that time, Benin had established imperial authority on the Ibos and the Ibibio of the Niger Delta in the east and had also established her authority on the Ekiti, Lagos (Eko) and Dahomey, a distance of over one thousand miles in the west (hence Dahomey is known as Benin Republic in modern times)

[15] The mode of settlement was small scale.

[16] Ajayi, 'The Aftermath of the fall of Oyo.'

[17] See Johnson, S. , The History of the Yorubas; Law, Robin, The Oyo Empire,

[18] Mabogunje, Akin L., Urbanization, in Nigeria, London, 1962.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

From the 15th century, when the Portuguese sailors arrived in West Africa and made contact with the Benin kingdom, [19]the center of life and activity of large populations and industry was in the eastern interior centered on the Benin kingdom. What we can say for sure at this juncture is this: in the west, the bulk of population lived in the northern areas where cities were large. South of that area (in Ijebu, Egba, Egbado, etc) population was not so thick.[20] In the east, the bulk of the population seems to have been in the south, around Owo, which was the largest city in eastern Yorubaland, and Ondo. Between the southeast and the southwest, that is, between Ondo and Ijebu, population was very thin. This was the largest area of thick forests. Only the small Ikale settlements in the far south of this area saved it from being totally uninhabited.

It is not known when and how the Yoruba people became differentiated into their ethnic sub-groups.[21] It is apparent that the Yoruba people could not have been differentiated into their present ethnic groups in the later part of the 18th century. It came about in some distant unknown past.[22] Horton says that the Yoruba became divided into numerous sub-ethnic units each made up of a number of small kingdoms, each assuming a name that was thrust upon it by its neighbors or that was related to its habitat more than a thousand years ago. [23]

---

[19] Ryder, The Benin Kingdom and the Europeans, Bradbury, Benin Studies.

[20] For evidence, see Clapper ton's account of his journeys in the 1820s. H. Clapperton, Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa, London, 1829.

[21] This took place much earlier than after Abiodun's death in 1789 as recently suggested by some historians. Abiodun was the last Alafin to reign over a prosperous Oyo Empire before his death in c1789. For this see Johnson, The History of the Yorubas, 1921, Law, The Oyo Empire, 97.

[22] According to Akinjogbin, the major components but independent sub-ethnic divisions of the Yoruba country about the beginning of the 18th century were 'Benin (Ibini), Ekiti (Effon), Egba, Egbado (Awori) Ife, Igbomina, Ijamo, Ijebu, including Idoko, Ijesha, Ketu, Ondo, Owu, Oyo and Sabe.' Akinjogbin, A.I., Dahomey and its Neighbors, 1708-1818, Thomas Hutchinson, 1969:170-1; cf. Lt Col. Ellis, A.B., The Yoruba Speaking people of the Slave Coast, 1894:10.

[23] Horton, Robin, 'Ancient Ife: A Re-assessment,' 6, 4, JHSN, 1976: 69-185

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Yoruba are culturally one people but it is not certain if they had a common name for themselves before the 19th century. By the beginning of the 19th century, all we have are the sub-group names. It was not until the late 19th century that the whole group gradually became known as the Yoruba.

The eastern Yoruba area encompasses slightly less than half the territory occupied by the Yoruba groups. The sub-groups in this eastern half are the Ijesha, Ekiti, Igbomina, Owo, Akoko, Ondo, Ikale, Ilaje and the cluster of small groups, Iyagba, Ikiri, Owe, Abunu and Kakanda in today's Kogi state. We may say that eastern Yorubaland starts with Ilesha and Igbomina in the west and ends at the border of Owo, Ondo, Idanre, Ikale and Ilaje with the Benin kingdom. The southern extent of Yorubaland ends at the Atlantic coast in the territory of the Ilaje.

The Yoruba language belongs to the Kwa group of languages.[24] It is spoken throughout Yorubaland with numerous dialects. In addition, non-Yoruba (but Kwa) languages are also spoken. For example, in addition to Yoruba, the Iyagba, and the Akoko and some Owo people speak non-Yoruba native languages from birth as well.[25]

The dialects of Yoruba spoken in some parts of eastern Yorubaland seem to have arisen from the fusion of two or more distinct cultures and peoples, resulting from occupation or conquering before the 19th century by the Edo (Benin) and Nupe (Tapa), two successive neighboring culture groups that invaded the eastern Yoruba area before

[24] Greenberg, Joseph, 'The Languages of Africa, Part 11,' IJAL, vol. 29, #.1, 1963, Bloomington: Indiana University, The Hague, Mouton, 1963.
[25] Oke defines 'ambi-lingualism' as having equal mastery of two languages. Oke, D.O., 'Language Choice in the Yoruba–Edo border area,' Odu, NS, No. 7, April, 1966: 52, 56. Some Yoruba peoples have equal mastery of two languages, e.g. the Akoko, Iyagba and Afenmai people.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and during the 19th century.[26] The autochthones of the area especially the early people of Ife, Ijesha, Ekiti and Idoko possessed their own languages upon which the languages of the latter immigrant settlers were grafted. These dialects have developed as a result of the frontier location of the settlements. The further one moves away from the Yoruba heartland, the more one encounters this language differentiation and more complex the sound of the Yoruba tongue becomes. This applies to settlements in the western and northern frontiers of Yorubaland and specifically in our case, the eastern frontier. One feature of the dialects of the eastern frontier is the presence of the 'gh' and 'gw' vocalic sounds which are derived from the Edo language. The 'gh' vocalic sound is prominent in the Ijesha, Ekiti, Owo, Ondo and Akoko dialects, all occupying locations bothering the Benin kingdom and additionally, the 'gw' sound, used in place of the letter 'w' is especially prominent in the Owo dialect, although the letter 'w' is also used.

Fadipe has postulated two broad dialect groups in Yorubaland: Oyo in the west and Ife in the east. [27] But in recent years, this has been modified by Adetugbo who has postulated three distinct subcultures of the Yoruba people: (i) a northwestern dialect area --- Oyo, Osun, Ibadan and the northern parts of Egba territory, (ii) a southeastern dialect area --- Ondo, Owo, Ikale, Ilaje and Ijebu, and (iii), a central dialect area -- Ife, Ijesha and Ekiti. [28] These dialects appear to be mutually unintelligible to an outside observer but to the indigenes, they are all mutually intelligible because they are based on one language substratum: Yoruba.

---

[26] Mason, M., 'The Jihad in the South: an outline of the 19th century Nupe Hegemony in Northeastern Yorubaland and Afenmai,' JHSN, # V, No. 2, 1970; May, D.J., 'Journey in the Yoruba and Nupe countries in 1859,' JRGS, # XXX, 1860.

[27] Fadipe, N. A. The Sociology of the Yoruba, London /Ibadan University Press, 1978.

[28] Adetugbo, A., 'The Yoruba Language in Yoruba History,' in S.O. Biobaku, (ed.) Sources of Yoruba History, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1979: 176-204.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

A feature of the cultural life of the Yoruba people is the custom of body decorations or tattoos. The facial and body marks practiced by the Yoruba reflect the distinctions among them, a form of insignia and sub-group identity. Bearing of body marks gave each sub-group a distinctive characteristic. In the case of Owo, Ashara says that these marks were originally meant for identification purposes but later on they served the additional purpose of bodily adornment but they could have also served both purposes from the beginning.

Although the Yoruba are culturally one and the same people, yet they are organized into a number of small kingdoms of varying sizes. They have, throughout their history, lived divided into these many small kingdoms. In the present state of our knowledge, we cannot tell whether they have lived in this way from their very beginning or the kingdoms are the products of a break-up of one single large kingdom. Some of the traditions relating to Ife seem to suggest one original kingdom.[29]

What we know is that in the course of Yoruba development, the kingdoms became grouped into sub-ethnic divisions. Because boundaries were imprecise, conflicts over boundary demarcations often resulted in wars being fought between two contiguous kingdoms. In some cases, a strong kingdom seeing the opportunity of expanding its territory, might spark off a war and seize part of the territory of its neighbors. A few kingdoms expanded their territories and swallowed up their neighbors as a result of such wars, but this was the exception rather than the rule. [30]

Politically, the most important peculiarity of the Yoruba people was the structure of their kingdoms. Unlike probably all their neighbors who also lived under kingdoms, the

---

[29] Ademakinwa, J.A. Ife: Cradle of the Yoruba, Lagos, 1958; Akinjogbin, Cradle of A Race: Ife from the Beginning to 1980, Sunray, Press, Ibadan & Port Harcourt, 1992

[30] See Akintoye, Revolution and Power Politics, 1971: xvi

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Yoruba kingdoms developed from early times a monarchical system which gave much emphasis to careful checks and balances. The manner of the origin and growth of every Yoruba kingdom was responsible for this type of constitution. The Yoruba kingdoms were founded in the period from the 11th century to the 15th century. Before the kingdoms, Yoruba people lived in small settlements, a few of which were grouped together from location to location. Settlements in each such group had very little contacts with one another; rather each lived as resolutely autonomous little state, under a leader (a sort of father of the group), who was also known by the Yoruba title of Oba, king. The kingdoms of the Yoruba emerged when certain movements, usually immigrant groups from other parts of Yorubaland, began to force each group of small ancient settlements to merge and form one single state under one king. Each group of old settlements thus became a kingdom.

Though all the people in each such kingdom acknowledged the authority of the king, the old settlements never lost their identities. Rather, they continued as recognizable units in the new kingdom, and their former rulers became the chiefs of the new kingdom, under the king. Each Yoruba kingdom was thus a plurality and its constitution recognized that fact and hence its system of compromises, checks and balances. However, the political system, symbolized by the Obas or rulers, of this frontier zone tends to gravitate towards the Benin type of political system. (This is discussed more fully later in chapter nine).

The Origin of the Yoruba People

The origin of the Yoruba people, like that of any other people of West Africa, is obscure. Among the Yoruba, however, two broad traditions of origin exist. One implies that the Yoruba people originated in their present homeland and have always lived there.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

According to this, in some great antiquity, when the face of the earth was all water, Olodumare, [31](God), sent some heavenly beings to come and create some solid earth on the watery waste and to establish the first plant and animal life and the first humans. The place of the first solid earth was Ife in the heart of Yorubaland, and the first humans were the ancestors of the Yoruba people. From Ife, the solid earth expanded, and plant, animal and human life spread out – hence, Ile-Ife, which means '*the home or the starting place of the spread.*' Archaeological excavations near Akure in the eastern part of the Yoruba heartland have produced evidence of human habitation dating back to the sixth or seventh millennium BC.[32] It is not possible to tell, however, whether or not today's Yoruba people are descendants of those earliest settlers.

The other tradition of origin presents a totally different picture. It asserts that the Yoruba people are immigrants from some source in the 'north,' led by a man named Oduduwa.[33] Thus, Oduduwa is not merely the founding father of the Yoruba people; he is also credited with being the founder of the monarchical system characteristic of the political life of the Yoruba. He is said to have founded the first Yoruba kingdom at Ile-Ife and to have been the father of men who left Ile-Ife to establish the earliest group of Yoruba kingdoms. Descent from Oduduwa and Ile-Ife became so important in Yoruba consciousness that every one of the tens of Yoruba kingdoms of our times claim an Ife descent for its royal lineage.[34]

---

[31] Idowu, E., Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief, New York, 1963.
[32] Shaw, Thurstan, 'The Prehistory of West Africa,' 49.
[33] See Johnson, Samuel, The History of the Yorubas, CSS Bookstore, (1988 edn.), 1988:35; Biobaku, S.O. The Lugard Lectures, Lagos, 1955
[34] Law, Robin, 'The Heritage of Oduduwa: Traditional History and Political Propaganda among the Yoruba,' JAH, X1V, 2, 1973; Asiwaju, A. I., 'Political Motivation and Oral Historical Tradition in Africa: the case of Yoruba crowns, 1900-1960,' Africa, 46, 1976: 113-23.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reconciling these two traditions has presented a serious challenge to historians. The emerging consensus seems to be that the Yoruba are, substantially, indigenous to their present homeland, and that, at some point in their history, a strong wave of immigrants came. The immigrants did not 'create' the Yoruba institution of monarchy; they merely seized control when they came, and then they introduced many changes into the existing political institutions, changes so profound that we may be justified in regarding them as revolutionary. The traditions also have it that these political changes in Ife and Yorubaland impacted the non-Yoruba people, the Edo, who are the southeastern neighbors of the Yoruba. Yoruba and Edo traditions broadly agree that an Ife prince named Oranmiyan came to Benin, ruled the Edo for some time, and bequeathed to them the monarchy, which was destined to make the Benin kingdom a great and famous kingdom on the coast of West Africa.[35]

The Kingdom of Owo

The kingdom of Owo, which existed when the British came in the late 19th century, is represented today by the Owo Local Government area of Ondo state in the federation of Nigeria.[36] According to the 1952 census, Owo was a community of 30, 700 people, placing the town about fifteenth in size among the Yoruba major urban centers.[37] The term 'Owo' is a modern Yoruba version of 'Ogho' the name of the town and kingdom. This term has two possible meanings. One is the literal meaning whose English equivalent means 'hallowed.' Some traditions say that this derived from the forest area

[35] Egharevba, A Short History, Akinola, G.A., 'The Origin of the Eweka Dynasty of Benin: A Study in the Use and Abuse of Oral Traditions', JHSN, # 8, 1976: 21-35.

[36] This is itself an offspring of the old Owo Division. Strictly speaking, the old Owo Division no longer exists, having been divided into Akoko and Owo Divisions and the latter into the Irekari, Ekamarun and Owo Districts. In this study, references to the old Owo Division have been left unchanged for simplicity.

[37] Krapf-Askaris, Eva, Yoruba Towns and Cities, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969:29. See Appendix 4.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

occupied by Owo which used to be regarded as a hallowed place (*'Igbo Erele'*) by the Yoruba people. Others say that it derived from the character of the prince who left Ife to go and found the Owo kingdom; it is claimed that he was generally beloved in Ife on account of his honorable and respectful demeanor. But 'Ogho' (or Owo) is also the name of a sacred symbol, the image of a sort of guardian spirit, which, according to some traditions, Oduduwa, the eponymous father of the Yoruba people, is said to have given the founder of the Owo kingdom at his departure from Ife. The Ogho cult [38]still exists as an important feature of the spiritual and political culture of Owo kingdom, its official custodian and devotee being the Alale of Idashen.

The ruler of Owo kingdom, who has the title of Olowo, (the Olu of Owo, i.e. the ruler of Owo as opposed to the 'owner of Owo' as the title may erroneously suggest), resided in its capital city of Owo. Ashara records that thirty Olowos have reigned in Owo kingdom since c1170, making the present incumbent, Oba Folagbade Olateru-Olagbegi, the thirty first Olowo.[39] The central city of the kingdom is its largest municipality. In the pre-colonial period, Owo city was defended by a wall system and three concentric rings of trenches called 'Yara' or moats built by successive Olowos from the time of Oshogboye in the 17th century. Oshogboye dug the first and oldest of these rings of trenches following his return from Benin City in c1602. Adedipe Elewuokun constructed the second and inner trench in the c1820s and Orimolade Aghagunghaye built the last and

[38] For details of the comparison between the 'Ogho' sacred symbol and the Ogboni cult in other Yoruba towns, see Awe, S.H.A., 'An Examination of the Traditional Socio-Political Organization of Owo: a study in Cultural Diffusion,' a mimeo read at the Historical Society of Nigeria Conference held at the University of Jos, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, 1977.

[39] After a controversial ascension in c2000 and his protracted fight for recognition by the Ondo State government, Folagbade Olateru is now recognized as the incumbent Olowo of Owo as Olagbegi III.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

outer most trenches in the c1860s,[40] with the remains of the moats and the wall systems still visible even toady.

Beyond that central city, rulers who accepted the Olowo as their suzerain ruled a number of towns and villages. [41] But the present power and extent of Owo kingdom, from at least the end of the 19th century and through the colonial period, (c1897-c1960), are but a shadow of what they had been in the 18th century. The kingdom had then included not only the present Owo Local Government Area, but also the Akoko and parts of Akoko-Edo /Afenmai areas in Edo state, the Irekari and Ekamarun areas and southern Ekiti-Irun, Ogbagi and Omuo, Emure and Ise in Ekiti state, an area encompassing Imaga, Imakeke and Imagongo in modern day Kogi State.[42]

One of the problems of this frontier kingdom was the indefinite determination of its boundaries, as they tended to expand and contract with the kingdom's fortunes at various times. Ashara says that the extent of the ancient kingdom of Owo 'reached in all directions from the capital,' [43] the present town of Owo, and it apparently wielded power and influence over its neighbors as the kingdom spread as far as Odighiri, beyond the Osse River to the southeast and as far as Kabba to the northeast, beyond the Ogbesse River to the west,[44] to Upafa in the southwest, and beyond Igbatoro and the Alla and

---

[40] Ashara, The History,

[41] See the extent of Owo under Traditional Administration in Chapter IX below.

[42] The writer visited these towns during a reconnaissance visit to Nigeria in April/May 2004. Imaga, Imakeke and Imagongo are towns located between Okene and Lokoja, not far from the confluence of the Rivers Niger and Benue.

[43] Chief Ashara's history of Owo is 'an authorized version' of Owo history. Ashara, M. B., The History of Owo, Owo, Nigeria, Moonlight Printing Press, 1951. A revised version of this document is not in print but a copy has been deposited at the Northwestern University Collections of Sources on African history.

[44] Chief Elerewe, Abraham Ojo Olakunori, says that Owo's northern boundary was the River Agere with Eleyegho, near Oba Ile, six miles from Akure on the west, as the boundary between Owo and Akure. Chief Elerewe was interviewed on August 16, 1984.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ofosu Rivers in the direction of Okeluse in the south.[45] Owo kingdom levied tributes from several neighboring kingdoms, towns and villages in this area. This study is concerned with this earlier period of Owo power, its rise and expansion, which came under British rule in the 1890s.

The capital of Owo kingdom lies at the eastern frontier of Yorubaland. It lies mid-way between Ife and Benin, 75 miles northwest of Benin City and 100 miles east of Ile-Ife. It is only about 25 miles east of Akure, the capital of Ondo state. The Owo country belongs to that geomorphic unit called the 'western plains and ranges.' [46] Owo lies on the old basement complex rock, which forms part of a strongly metamorphosed rock, highly susceptible to chemical weathering, with high temperatures, between 68^0F and 94^0F, which obtain throughout the year. Heavy rainfall of about 40^{11} falls between April and October, leading to the development of thick vegetation cover in some places. The area is full of hills, some reaching 1000^1 above sea level but decreases gradually southward to about 850^1. These hills include those of Isuada, Iselu, Uwangwe, Oke-Ijebu, Ilale and Iyere. There are two main river valley systems: river Ogbesse in the west and in the east, river Uwesse, both tributaries of river Osse, which drains into the lagoon.

---

[45]Chief Ashara was interviewed at his Irengun street residence in Ijebu quarter, Owo, many times between 1983 and 1986. Although Kabba is claimed as part of Owo, no mention of such intimate connection is made in Kabba's history by Niven, C.R., in his article, 'The Kabba Province of the Northern Provinces, Nigeria.' The Geographical Journal, 68, October, 1926 289-302. Niven mentioned such places as Lokoja, Bida and many other towns important in Kabba's history. However, in 1985, when this writer paid a visit to Ilorin, beyond Kabba to the north, he saw a sign board, pointing southwards, marked, 'To Owo,' erected on the major road leading out of the city of Ilorin.

[46] Buchanan, K.M. and Pugh, J.C. Land and People in Nigeria, London, 1962: 20.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Now that we know a little bit about the Yoruba people including the people of Owo, their homeland and their origin, we need to know when and how the Owo people came to be at this frontier location: the arrival there of the immigrant groups who make up the core of the Owo kingdom today and the other component members of the Owo society - where they came from, when they arrived, their relationship with the original inhabitants of the land and the evolution of Owo society. The next chapter deals with these issues as they are important factors in our understanding of the ways in which the people of Owo have handled the issues of their existence and carved out a niche for themselves in the eastern extremity of this Yoruba ethnic frontier, and how they have handled their relationship with the once powerful kingdom of Benin between the 15th and 17th centuries, the period of Owo-Benin intensive interactions. But before that, we need to discuss the foundations of Owo society, the migration of peoples, the various periods of Owo history and the extant kings' lists.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER THREE

Foundations of Owo Society

The history of the origins of the Owo kingdom is part of the general history of Yoruba kingdoms. Owo traditions have it that the founder of the Owo kingdom was an Ife prince, Ojugbelu, who left Ile-Ife at the same time as Oranyan, (Oranmiyan), another Ife prince who later became the Oba of Benin.[1] It is said that the two princes, Ojugbelu and Oranyan, traveled together as far as the outskirts of Ile-Ife and separated.[2] The beginnings of the Owo ruling family can thus be traced to Ile-Ife. Asunlola, whose other name was Ojugbelu (other sources call him Arere or Alaghaiye), the leader of the migrants and founder of the dynasty, left Ife some time in about the 12th century accompanied by a large retinue made up of his family and supporters, as well as a number of other prominent Ife citizens each of whom led a small group of followers. Ojugbelu, a hunter by profession, was the leader of the whole group, but each of the prominent citizens was leader of a small group and later these prominent citizens were to become chiefs (the Ighare chiefs) after the migrants had created a kingdom.

On leaving Ife territory, the Oduduwa party, (i.e. the Owo group under Ojugbelu), first stopped at Ujin, a place near Idanre, a small kingdom located southwest of Owo. Before getting to Ujin, they had come across another migrant group from Ife who had lost its way. The Ojugbelu group helped this other group to find its way and received some gifts for the help. However, the people of Ujin were hostile. It is said that they resorted to cannibalism and preyed on Ojugbelu's people and because of that, war ensued. The Ujin

[1] See Egharevba, A Short History, 1960: 12. Benin is Owo's immediate neighbor to the southeast.
[2] Omosanya, L.O., 'The Olowo of Owo chieftaincy title up to 1960: A case study of a traditional Yoruba Institution,' B.A. degree original Essay, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, June 1983: 4.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

people were nearly wiped out before Ojugbelu decided to abandon the site. From Ujin, the migrants came to Upafa, some distance southeast of Idanre, where they stayed for some years. Their leader, Ojugbelu, died at Upafa, and it is said that his son, Imade, became the new leader. Owo traditions suggest that the migrants would have terminated their journey at Upafa and take root there, but, again, they had to abandon the place and move on because of the inclement weather conditions and frequent raids by hostile neighbors. Heading eastwards, they began to penetrate parts of the thickest forests in Yorubaland. In these parts, their journey encountered serious difficulties. The traditions recorded by this writer speak of hunger and frantic searches for food and water.[3] At one location, hunting for some monkeys led some men in the group to a spring of good water, an incident which led to the creation of a custom whereby, out of gratitude to those monkeys, all Omolowos[4] may not eat of the flesh of a monkey. Further eastwards, the migrants came to the area of what was to become Owo and, under Imade, established their first settlement at a place, which they named Okemade (Oke–Imade or Imade's hill) in honor of their leader, in what was then Idashen territory.

Another important tradition relating to the origins of Owo is found in the *Odu Ifa* (Ifa Corpus), the sacred folk literature of the Yoruba people. According to this tradition, Orunmila, reputed to be the greatest priest of Ifa (the Yoruba god of divination), in early Yoruba history, lived in Ife about the time of Oduduwa. He was famous because of his immense knowledge of the god of divination and his abilities at divining and prophesying. However, because he was childless, he felt that people did not honor him, as

---

[3] Chief Adafin Atabanti Fayemiwo, acting Akowa of Iloro quarter, (1952-1962)

[4] I.e. princes and princesses of the Owo kingdom. Ashara, The History, This is the reason for the oriki (cognomen) of Owo citizens: 'Omo Olowo a i je ran edun; edun fori igi le le, o fi oru le sapo lona Owo,' meaning: 'The children of the Olowo, (i.e. free born citizens of Owo), who abhor the flesh of monkeys; because of lack of molestation, monkeys have abandoned treetops to live on roof tops at Owo.'

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

they should, and that they ridiculed him behind his back. In his old age, he finally began to have children, and he had a total of eight sons. When his last son was born, he named him 'Owo,' [5] saying, *'people honor me now because I have all these sons.'* Orunmila's sons left Ife in his lifetime to become rulers of important communities in parts of Yorubaland. His oldest son, Alara, became the king of Ara (in the Ekiti country), and his youngest son became the Olowo, king of Owo.

The Ifa sacred literature gives more detail to the story of Olowo. After he had left home and had obtained the traditional beaded crown that Yoruba kings wore, Olowo became insolent towards his father, Orunmila. Orunmila celebrated a grand sacred festival annually at which he wore a crown, and to which his sons were invited to honor him and bring gifts and pay homage. All the other children, excepting Olowo, dutifully went. Olowo made a practice of staying away. And when his father sent messengers to ask him why, he answered impudently, 'You, Orunmila, adorn yourself in glistening festival clothes; I, Olowo, adorn myself in glistening festival clothes, too. You, Orunmila, walk with a brass walking stick; I, Olowo walk with a brass walking stick, too. You, Orunmila, wear brass sandals; I, Olowo, wear brass sandals, too. You, Orunmila, wear a crown; I, Olowo, wear a crown, too. And it is the custom of our land that he who wears a crown must never bow his head to another.' This answer so shocked the old man that, according to *Odu Ifa*, he 'departed this earth and went to heaven,'- probably meaning that he committed suicide or died of heartbreak.

It is not clear how this detailed tradition is to be reconciled with the other traditions about Ojugbelu who led his followers out of Ile-Ife and was succeeded, at some point on

[5] 'Owo' literally means 'honor,' 'dignity,' or 'respect,' in the Yoruba language. The name 'Owo' may therefore mean 'the honored one.'

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the long journey to Owo, by his son, Imade. It is known, however, that the Yoruba give many names to every baby at birth. It is therefore not impossible that Ojugbelu was the same person as Olowo, and that the act of disrespect to his 'father' occurred while he and his followers resided for some years at any of the places where they stopped on their way to Owo. This would make the Olowo not a descendant of Oduduwa but of a great Ile-Ife personage - unless, of course, if Orunmila himself were of Oduduwa descent. Because of this it could be presumed that Orunmila was only a father figure to the Olowo not his actual father.

However, this Orunmila story appears to be somehow important in understanding the story of the origin of Owo and her connection with Ife, the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. Abiodun says that it is another piece of evidence that supports the claim of Owo's origination from that ancient kingdom. According to him, the story is certainly important in its portrayal of the personality of the Olowo. Although in this story, the Olowo is depicted as an arrogant person, who not only dressed as his 'father' Orunmila but, refused to accept Orunmila's authority, we can also see the cultural and historical relationship between Owo and Ife in their formative years. Olowo's confrontation with Orunmila provoked a violent reaction, which may have led to the death of Orunmila. Recent archaeological excavations at Owo support the mythological connections between the Owo and Ife kingdoms. In a pair of bronze figures found at Ita Yemoo, in Ile Ife,[6] there is a chiefs' regalia in ancient Ife which still features prominently in ritual and other ceremonial contexts in Owo.[7]

---

[6] Abiodun, Rowland, 'The kingdom of Owo,' in J. H. Drewal, J. Pemberton with R. Abiodun, Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought, New York, 1989: 21-45.
[7] 'The kingdom of Owo.'

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Finally, there has recently been recorded from Idanre, another kingdom in eastern Yorubaland, an obscure tradition that traces Owo's origin to Idanre. According to this tradition, recorded by a certain Akindoju and Oladunjoye, citizens of Idanre,[8] the founder of the Owo ruling family was a man named Ayewase, a servant of one of the early rulers of Idanre. Ayewase fell out with his master and fled, with a considerable following of his relations and sympathizers and finally settled in what is now Owo. Some ritual objects, which this man brought with him from Idanre- especially a metal gong- later, became the material base of an important communal ceremony in the town founded by him and his followers.

Nothing, however, in the traditions of Owo or of Owo's neighbors concerning Owo supports this Idanre tradition. No Olowo ever bore the name Ayewase, and nothing in Owo's palace history and practices shows any evidence of contact with Idanre. Metal gongs feature as the musical instrument of choice in the Igogo festival, the grand annual ceremony of the Olowos, but the origins of the Igogo festival, as well as the use of iron gongs, is too well and widely known to be confused with anything else. The Igogo festival is held annually by the Olowos in commemoration of a famous wife of a 14th century Olowo, and gongs rather than drums are used in it because the woman's cultic connections, from the beginning, forbid the use of drums.

Nevertheless, this is not to deny any connection between Owo and Idanre in the course of their histories. Ujin and Upafa, places of some importance in the account of the Olowo's migration from Ife to Owo, are close to Idanre. Upafa has been identified as a place only about six miles from the site of old Idanre at Utaja, though Ujin has not been

[8] Akindoju, S.A. and D.O. Olagundoye, History of Idanre, Ibadan, 1962.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

definitely located. Also, at a much later date in Owo's history, an important personage migrated from his home in Ijumu, a place in today's Kwara State of Nigeria and came to settle in Owo. On his way, he lived for some time in Idanre. On arrival in Owo, he became an important person in Owo's political life, ultimately rising to the prestigious position of the second in rank to the Olowo, with the title of Ojumu. However, the history of the Ojumu family bears no relationship with the Idanre tradition of Ayewase.

The traditions recorded by this writer [9]make it clear that by the time of the arrival of the large immigrations in about the 12th century, the earlier settlers in Owo were already organized into a number of small states, each under a sort of headman. The traditions refer to these headmen as 'kings,' and their territories as 'kingdoms' but the exact nature of their 'kingship' and 'kingdom' remains unclear.[10] A certain mixture of gerontocracy and priestly authority seems to have characterized each of their tiny states. On the whole, although they were not kingdoms on a scale comparable to that of the later kingdom of Owo, they were nevertheless kingdoms in their own right.

Each group was self sufficient in its mode of economy, with little need or capacity for excess production for exchange or distribution. Consequently, each group's contact beyond itself was very limited. The traditions even suggest that each group had a language of its own, different from the language of most of the others. The names of many of the groups have come down to us. In some cases, both the group name and the ruler's title are preserved in the traditions- for example, Efene under the Elefene, Omu under the Olomu, Utelu under the Olutelu, and Ode-Osen under the Osen. In other cases, we have the group names but not the rulers' titles - Isoju (Iyere), Igbe, Upo, Okese, Oko,

[9] Interviews conducted at Owo and elsewhere in the region between 1984 and 1986 tend to confirm this.
[10] See a recent study by a good friend of this writer, Ademola Osho, Ayero: The History of Iyere Kingdom, self published, Iyere (Owo), 2003.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ofi, Igherepe-Idan and Idashen. These groups, and others no longer remembered lived in more or less isolated forest clearings in what was later to develop and become the city of Owo, the capital city of a fairly large and proud kingdom. According to Ashara, the largest and best remembered of the groups, Efene under the Elefene, lived at Oke–Asegbo, (Asegbo hill), now the site of the Owo Town Hall.

Owo traditions, recorded by Ashara and confirmed by this writer, say that when Imade and his followers arrived, the Efene and the other settlers welcomed them but that troubles later broke out between the two. Ashara says that the Elefene, 'having accepted to be loyal to the Olowo later revolted against the latter.'[11] However, the available evidence suggests otherwise. The Elefene was already well established as ruler of his people when Imade and his people arrived. When he sat in audience for his people, he sat on a high throne. The Olowo, in contrast, had only a modest seat on which he sat to receive his people. The picture one gets is that the Elefene was rich, surrounded by all the pomp of royalty, while the Olowo was a newcomer to the country, was only a leader with very limited means. Apparently, the Elefene came to have reasons to suspect the newcomers, and in time he began to take action to frighten them away. So, the Elefene would send his people twice daily to sneak in among the immigrants and kidnap people. Then, according to the traditions, the Elefene also stirred up the rulers of the other groups of Omu, Utelu, etc, against the newcomers. Although the Owos were able to survive these troubles, they could not defeat the combined forces of the indigenous peoples at once. The latter were more familiar with the country. The situation seems to have remained like this for many years, until; at last, the Owos began to find ways to prevail.

---

[11] Ashara, The History.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Many factors seem to have contributed to the ultimate success of the Owo people in this contested territory. The traditions say that Imade's people had better weapons than the indigenous people, such as iron-tipped spears, coats of mail, etc. Possession of such weapons appears to have been, in general, an important factor in the success of the Oduduwa group in establishing their dominance in Yorubaland. The indigenous old settlements knew the use of iron also, but not to the same level as the new comers in making good weapons. In the confrontation which developed between Imade and the indigenous people, who also were iron-using, the slight edge in the quality of weaponry appears to have been decisive.

The development of the town of Owo went through an evolutionary process. The process started in the 12th century with the foundation of the kingdom and gradually culminated in the later part of the 18th century with the division of the capital of Owo into quarters. The first quarter Iloro, came into being in the early days, probably in the 13th century, followed by the coming into being of the Igboroko quarter which was founded in the 14th century by the Olowo Ogeja. Isaipen was founded in the reign of Olowo Alamuren in the early part of the 16th century. Ehin-Ogbe came into being later in that century when Olowo Omasan established it for strangers who were streaming into the settlement from the neighboring Akoko and Akoko–Edo and Afenmai ('Kukuruku') areas. Ijebu was not formally declared a quarter until the later part of the 18th century by Olowo Adedipe (or Elewu-okun). The kingdom of Owo thus included, in the early part of the 19th century, the capital and its environs with the town itself made up of five

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Quarters, each the size of a British borough consisting of wards and numerous streets. These Quarters are, namely, Iloro, Igboroko, Ehin-Ogbe, Isaipen and Oke-Ijebu.[12]

The oldest Quarter, Iloro, lies just to the south of the palace and consists of the descendants of the followers of the first Olowo on his trip from Ife to Owo. According to the oriki or praise poem of the Iloro people, Iloro is the 'head' of all Owo[13] and the residents of that Quarter make strenuous efforts to keep themselves pure of aliens. The history of the Yoruba generally suggests that Ife was the original home of the Yoruba people and this is enshrined in the poetic reference to the people of Iloro quarter.[14] The prominent persons who came in the Ojugbelu group from Ife became known as the Ighare chiefs of the Iloro quarter. The Iloro chiefs are headed by the Akowa, a title that rotated among certain Iloro titled families. Iloro is really the most important quarter in Owo kingdom because of its ritual significance, with the Ighare chiefs initially numbering twelve[15] but are now more in number.

The largest quarter, Igboroko, both in land area and population density (with many sub-quarters and numerous streets) is situated in front of the palace. Members of the incumbent Olowo's household and their extended families live in Igboroko nla (large

---

[12] Igboroko (Igbo=forest, Iroko=tree; Igbo Iroko, a forest full of Iroko trees=Igboroko)
Iloro (Ilu=town; Oro=rituals, Iluoro, a town of rituals=Iloro) Ehin-Ogbe (Ehin=back, behind; Ogbe=town (Edo, i.e. behind the city walls or outskirts of the town); Isaipen (Edo=slave quarters);
Ijebu=Edo, Uzebu meaning strangers' Quarters; this was contracted to 'Ijebu' in Owo dialect. Uzebu is the home of Chief Ezomo in Benin City as Ijebu is the home of Chief Ojomo in Owo.

[13] Cf. the cognomen of Adafin, Father of all Ighare, chiefs of Iloro Quarters - 'Atunwa ye n'Ogho; Ogele ma'ken,' meaning, 'Atunwa, who owns Owo; Ogele, the son of Iken?'

[14] These are the cognomens of the people of Iloro Quarter: 'Omo Onu'fe sa pe ohun,' 'The children of Ife who are reticent in speech.' 'Omo Onu'fe sa ma je ode,' 'The children of Ife who are selective in the day of hunting.' 'Omo Onu'fe ye ro ala,' 'The children of Ife who are fond of wearing white cloth.' 'Omo Onu'fe ye ro okinkin Aso,' 'The children of Ife who wear the best type of clothes.' 'Omo Onu'fe ye she edigba we ri we,' 'The children of Ife on whose necks dangle strings of coral beads.' Madam Eunice Tinuade Olugbadehan, aged 82.

[15] These are Adafin, Arogho, Alajagho, Inonren, Alagha, Irangun, Orogun, Okipe, Erelogho, Oderedere, Ojomojama and Adanigbo. Others are Odofogho, Asaba, Odolofin, Odogun, Asaghe, Aro, Sagho and Alamunren.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Igboroko). This quarter always teems with people related to the throne, among who are the 'Omolowos,' (descendants of past Olowos), free-born citizens and freed slaves, who have become assimilated into the general population. Hence this quarter is often referred to as the Olowo's quarter. The Quarter is under the authority of Chief Ojumu, [16] who occupies the position of second [17] in rank to the Olowo, but lives in Ehin-Ogbe quarter. Igboroko is also the home of Chiefs Elerewe, Sashere, Owadogbon and many other important chiefs.

The third quarter, Ehin-Ogbe,[18] became the area where strangers were settled upon their admittance to Owo. Residents in this quarter also included refugees and asylum seekers who have left their original homes because of disputes over chieftaincy titles or because of threats from more powerful neighbors. These people later made their home in Owo town. These include the people from Sabongida-Ora in the Afenmai ('Kukuruku') districts and Afo in the Akoko country to mention only a few. A people called Uka were captured in Imeri, Akoko Edo area, by the leader of this quarter, Chief Osere Udamoghola, in the 17th century and he settled them at a short distance from Ehin-Ogbe quarter, behind the Olowo's palace.

The fourth quarter, Isaipen, is situated to the north of the palace, a spillover from Oke-Ajana, where chief Ajana resides. Most of the captives in Owo's wars, strangers and the descendants of people of erstwhile servile status were resettled in this quarter in the

[16] Chief Ojumu does not reside in Igboroko but lives at Ehin-Ogbe, the strangers' Quarter. Beeley says that chief Ojumu originally came from Idanre but in actual fact, the first Ojumu came from Ijumu in Iyagba district in Kwara state. Oral traditions: Elerewe, Ashara and Fayemiwo.
[17] A position formerly occupied by the Oshodi, hence the Ojumu also occupies Oshodi's former residence. His oriki, 'A ri bi do bi oba,' means: 'One who settles down like a king,' makes his alien status clear.
[18] 'Ogbe,' is the Edo word for 'palace,' 'Ehin,' is Yoruba for 'behind.' Ehin-Ogbe is situated behind the palace, hence this name.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

period, c1700-c1900. Chief Ajana, a refugee from Oke-Afa near Oke Agbe in the Akoko country presides over this quarter.

Ijebu quarter, the fifth and last quarter in Owo town, was originally a separate community which lay on the outskirts of Owo, though not an independent entity. Ijebu is contiguous to Owo and it is an integral part of the town. Refugees from the wars in Akoko, Ute and Ifon originally peopled Ijebu. These were displaced persons who had the intention of returning to their homes after things had returned to normal. In c1782 or thereabouts, Olowo Adedipe Elewuokun, (alias *Ashaparaogun*, 'hard and sprite as ogun-god of steel'), gave it as a fiefdom to his brother, Oludipe, after creating the Ojomo title and had it conferred on the latter. As a result of the enhancements of the title of the head of the quarter, Ojomo, the Quarter later became semi-autonomous. But the status of the Ojomo has never been that of an independent crowned head and as a result, the status of Ojomo has always been a source of confusion and controversy.

Eight satellite townships, some of which are made up of a cluster of villages, surround Owo town itself. These are Umoje or Idashen, made up of Ilale-ile, Ilale-oko, Ujelu, Ijegunma and Isijogun; Amunren; Ipele, (including Ofi, Oko and Itapele); Iyere (with Ulema, Okese, Igbe, and Upo); Emure-Ile; Isho; Isuada (and Odeya); Amunren Oganyin (including Ujo, Okiti-Omu and Uta), and then Upenmen.[19]

Like all Yoruba kingdoms then, the Owo kingdom started and grew as a combination of many diverse elements- the groups that pre-existed the Imade immigrants, the Imade immigrants themselves, and the various immigrant groups that soon came from places like Ife, Benin, Iyagba and even the Nupe country on the Niger. Owo kingdom, therefore,

[19] This make-up constitutes a popular saying in Owo: 'Ti 'reko, ti 'seko, Upenmen o s'okesan Ogho,' meaning: 'In both village and hamlet, Upenmen is ninth among the settlements in Owo proper.'

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

developed as a much more varied plurality than most other Yoruba kingdoms. This happened because Owo occupied a peculiarly advantageous location which made Owo the junction of many ancient trade routes. The main north-to-south routes connecting Yorubaland with the Edo country to the southeast passed through Owo and this made Owo, early in her development, to become the most important point on that route. An ancient east –to- west route existed in the coastal lagoons to which Owo was connected through Benin. A little further into the interior, another east–to–west forest route existed. This route, coming from the northeast, goes through Ikare, in the Akoko sector, through Owo and then to Ondo and the Ijebu forest. The high hills and rock outcrops of the Idanre area forces this route to bend southward into the area of Owo. Owo thus developed as a meeting place of north-to–south and east–to–west routes and the lagoon route, a very formidable commercial position in early Yoruba history. This partly accounts for her affluence and wealth.

As a result of the above reasons, many immigrant groups from Ife, Benin and other core areas came to settle at Owo at various periods. One reason for this may be attributable to its frontier location as it fronts Benin. While some among the new immigrants settled in the capital town with the dynastic people, others settled in the outskirts of the metropolis. Among those who settled in the capital were some people called Ekusi, (from Egusi Egbe in the Akoko Edo area), the Uka, and Ora? [20] These people came from different parts of Akoko, Irekari and Akoko-Edo districts. The sources suggest that some among the people mentioned above were captives in early Owo forays into the neighboring districts in the

[20] Oral sources and conversations with several residents of Ekusi, Uka and Ora Sub-Quarters and streets in Owo between 1982 and 1986. See also Robin Poynor, 'The Egungun of Owo,' AA, vol. I, 1978: 78-91.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

17th century. People were still moving into the area even as late as the 18th century. [21] Members of each of these groups are distinguished by their special names, egungun (masque) festivals, and yam harvest and eating ceremonies, etc., which are quite distinct from those of the dynastic group in Owo even today.[22]

Among the earliest immigrants into the Owo country from the Benin kingdom were the Ipele people, who are said to have arrived at their present location during the reign of Olowo Imagele (c1430-c1481). The reason for their departure from Ighonren, a village in the Benin kingdom is not known.[23] What is remembered, however, is that they immigrated into Owo under one Olori and settled with the Oko and Ofi people at Ita-pele. Their leader, with the title of Atiba, had to pay tribute to the Olowo. Close proximity to the large and growing city of Owo was a factor. As Owo grew commercially, the economic life of Ipele came to depend more and more on Owo. Even then, the evidence suggests that Ipele held on to her independence for a long time and that the process of absorption into the polity of Owo was still on-going even into the 19th century.

Upenmen, like Ipele, claims to have been a Benin village, lying about five miles in the north of Owo. Beeley says that it has always acknowledged the Olowo as overlord.[24] Upenmen is ruled by the Olupenmen under the authority of the Olowo.

Iyere, (and the small settlements of Upo, Igbe and Okese), lies approximately three miles to the southeast of Owo. The people of Iyere claim to have migrated from Ile-Ife

---

[21] For example, some people from Ajase-Ipo in the Igbomina area or Ajase in Akoko-Edo Districts, came to settle at Owo during the 17th century. They still constitute the majority of people living at Ile Oloro in *Igboroko nla*, 'large Igboroko' quarter in Owo town.

[22] Even up to our times, the Isaipen people still bear Ake (men) and Aleke, (women), while women in Ora still bear Alaminrin, reminiscent of the original names born at their places of origin.

[23] It was also during the reign of Olowo Imagele that the great Benin general, Iken, was sent to quell a rebellion in Owo. This may mean that the village may have been instituted as a Benin military post for overseeing a rebellious vassal state in the area.

[24] Beeley, Intelligence Report, para. 57. Beeley says that Upenmen might have been created by Benin as a garrison to watch a rebellious state nearby.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

about the same time as Owo. But this seems inaccurate as there is some evidence which suggests that Iyere was already settled before the arrival of the Owo. Some Akoko towns of Iboropa, Ikare and Arigidi, for example, claim that they came with Owo and dispersed at Iyere.[25] The people of Iyere are closely related to Owo and their ruler, the Ayere, (head of all Oliyeres), is said to have been created by the Olowo. In common with other villages in the neighborhood, they paid tribute to the Olowo and assisted Owo in times of war.

Isuada, headed by the Asuada, lies three miles northwest of Owo and includes Ode-iya. It was founded by an Owo prince, Ologwa, who had gone there to heal a debilitating disease and was not allowed to return to Owo even after he became healed. But Beeley erroneously claims that Isuada originated from Ife.[26]

Idashen, a collective name by which seven hamlets in the vicinity of Owo are known - Ilale-Ile, Ilale-Oko, Ishijogun, Ijegunma, Amunren, Ulema and Ujelu - lies to the south of Iloro quarter. This group appears to have been an advance party of the Owo group. They are said to have been splintered from the Owo group from Ife.[27] The Alale Agbokun '*Ajabi-aira*,' [28] in fact, claims to have descended by a chain from heaven.[29] Although they are Owos, they kept to their scattered settlements and did not merge with the main body to form one town. Their leader, the Alale, was under the Olowo. Ashara claims that the Olowo created the title of Alale, by which the head of Idashen is known. The fact that

---

[25] Akomolafe, C.O., 'Akoko under British Colonial Rule,' M. Phil. Thesis, Ife, 1976: 21; see also Akintoye, 'The Northeastern Yoruba Districts,' 543, quoting Beeley.
[26] Beeley, 'Intelligence Report,' para. 55.
[27] Ashara, The History, Beeley, Intelligence Report, 1935: 35
[28] The 'Aja bi ara' ('fights like lightning'), cognomen borne by the Alale of Ilale–Ile might have stemmed from the weapon possessed by one of the Alales and used to fight during the Benin wars. Alale Adetifa described an instrument that his grand father had that sounded like '...thunder and killed people at a distance when the scrotal was pulled....' This might be one of the Danish guns that came into the possession of the Owo people in the later part of the 16th century. Ryder, A.F. C., 'Dutch Trade on the Nigerian Coast during the Seventeenth Century,' JHSN, 3, 2, 1965: 195-210
[29] The 'chain from heaven' claim is generally accepted to mean an autochthonous origin.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Alale – meaning: the owner of the land - might have been one of the original owners of the land makes this claim preposterous. Ilale has always been in two parts: Ilale-Ile (home Ilale), and Ilale-Oko, (farm or bush Ilale). These two sections take it in turn to provide the Alale, a custom which prevails to our times.

The people of Emure-Ile say that they migrated from Ile-Ife, passing through Ekiti (Emure-Ijaloke), before settling down at their present site, some ten kilometers from Owo. For centuries they remained independent in their own right until disaster forced them to seek Owo's protection.

The Isho people were originally part of Oba, an old village near Akure and some twenty (20) miles northwest of Owo. They came to settle in their present site following a disagreement over succession to the title of the village head of Oloba. At Isho, their leader, one Olumo, the original title holder at Oba-Ile, took the title of Oloba. Olumo was able to bear this title in this new settlement with the acquiescence of the Owo authorities. Isho denies ever being subject to Owo, claiming that they were simply on friendly terms with Owo. They claim that it was their circumstances of dislocation that brought them to their present site. Although Isho was never independent of Owo, from their dialect, which is akin to the Ekiti dialect, (Akure variant), it is clear they are not Owo. But over the years and many cultural ties have been formed, Isho is now regarded as an integral part of Owo.

Eventually, all these satellite towns and villages became subordinate to Owo, paid tribute to the Olowo, supplied mandatory labor for the maintenance and protection of the kingdom, and participated in the rituals of the kingdom. The rulers of some of the settlements sat in council with the Olowo and his advisors.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

There are also some other settlements, while claiming independent origin and existence, are located close to Owo and thereby have become subject to her authority. The Idoani and Idogun people trace their origins to Benin. But it seems that, in the case of Idoani, it was the Ani dynasty at Ido that came from Benin. Before his arrival, settlements in the area include Isewa, Amusi-Igbo, Esure, Ako and Iyayu.[30] These small groups of people, in spite of the presence of Ani, who established the Ido (or Ado) section and claims descent from the royal lineage in Benin, were subject to the authority of Owo. In the 19th century, after a long period of semi-autonomy, Idoani, Idogun, Ipesi, Ifira and Ishosan, needed protection from the ravages of the Nupe jihadist forces and later the Ijesha army under Ogedemgbe and so had to seek the Olowo's help.

The people of Ifon claim to have migrated from Ife under Akogun who had the title of Olufon.[31] They first settled at a place lying between Oshogbo and Ogbomosho near present day Ilobu in Oyo state. The name of this settlement was Ifon-Ile or Ifon-Mopo. Later, following the death of Akogun, dispute arose between two of his sons as to which one of them should succeed him. When one of these sons, called Oludagba, failed to succeed to the title, he left with his followers and settled near Uzebba and later crossed the Osse River between Idoani and Ipele and settled at a place called Osse-Atare. This place is now an important shrine. They later left this area to settle in their present abode. The Ifon people deny being subject to the Owo people originally but following their conquest by the Owos in the war of c1877, they became subject to Owo.[32]

The Ukaro people also came through the same route as the Ifons but they claim that

---

[30] Beeley, Intelligence Report, p. 12; D.O Asabia and J.O. Adegbesan, Idoani Past and Present, Ibadan University Press, 1970:2

[31] Beeley, Intelligence Report,

[32] Pa Sumanu Arobo, interviewed on 10/08/85, said that the bulk of the people from Ifon procured during raids into the area in the 19th century, were in the Olowo's palace.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

their initial home was Ile-Ife. They came under one Idewue, who brought with him the title of Asumbo. They stopped at Ikare and later moved to Uzebba and from there to their present abode near Ifon.

The Imoru people claim to have come from Benin. They arrived under one Oja, a son of the Oba of Benin. Oja later assumed the title of Olimoru. The Imoru people first settled where Ute now stands but a quarrel arose between them and the people of Okeluse and they left the site. The Imoru then moved to a site between Ifon and Ukaro. Later, the Ifons arrived and the Imorus claim that they escorted Odu and Asikin before the Oba of Benin for the settlement of the dispute as to who was the head of Ifon in the 18th century. This shows that, by the time the Ifon and others arrived in the area, Benin had some informal political influence in the area. Owing to the continual quarrels with Ifon on one side of them and Ukaro on the other, the Imoru people shifted again to their present site, some eight kilometers south of Ifon. This shift also led to skirmishes with Ijagba, an immigrant group from Benin and an offshoot of Sobe.

The people of Sobe claim to have come from Benin under Irere, a son of the Oba of Benin. It is claimed that the migration was due to a quarrel which arose between Irere and his father, the Oba of Benin over one of the Oba's wives. When the Oba of Benin sought to punish his erring son, Irere, he and his followers fled Benin and later settled at Ekpoma.[33] While there, they quarreled with the local inhabitants and were driven to Ilepa, from where, after further fighting, they moved to the present site of Sobe around c1485.[34] The Sobe people thus appear to be the first settlers in the Ifon side of Owo area. Later, Osiba, a grandson of Irere and his followers left the main body and founded Ijagba which

[33] Agbede, E., 'Sobe since c1485,' B.A. original essay, University of Ife, 1973
[34] Ishan Division, Benin Province, see Beeley, Intelligence Report, op. cit.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

is only a little over two kilometers from Sobe. The rulers of both towns bear the title Odibiado.

The people of Ute are said to have come from Imeri, a town whose inhabitants say they originally came from Benin into the 'Kukuruku' country in Edo state. Akensi, the founder of Ute, is said to have left Imeri owing to a dispute over the Onimeri title. He and his followers settled for a time near Sabongida-Ora in the Ishan country and then moved to the present site of Ute, where for many years they were subject to the Oba of Benin. When in later years, they eventually tried to break away and a Benin punitive expedition scattered the village, a large number of Ute people fled to Owo and were settled at the Irugbe and Oke-shanma sub-quarters of the Ijebu quarter. The Ute people are closely related to Owo and speak the same dialect of the Yoruba language as Owo. Owo traditions maintain that the people of Imeri are related to Owo and, in fact, are Owo in origin.[35]

According to the people of Okeluse, they originally came from Ile-Ife under Oluiyin, the first Ojima or Arinjale of Okeluse. It is claimed that the first Ojima was the elder brother of the first Oba of Benin and the first Olowo of Owo and that he left Ile-Ife about the same time as the other two.[36] The influence of Benin in custom and dress was strongly evident at Okeluse and many in Okeluse understood the Benin language in the pre-colonial period. Okeluse was originally a large town known as Orunmojo which later split up between two brothers over succession disputes over the title of Ojima, the town head. When Akentori, the incumbent Ojima died, his eldest son, Adeoba, following the system of primogeniture, succeeded to the throne but another candidate, claiming

[35]. Beeley, Intelligence Report, para 45.
[36] Agbede, 'Sobe,' 27.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

legitimate right of succession, left the town when he failed to secure the throne, with a large following and founded Use or Ise-Ekiti in Ekiti area.[37] The title of the head of the new settlement is also Ojima or Arinjale.[38]

Akoko country

In the northern reaches of the Owo kingdom are a people called the 'Akoko.' Three interpretations have been advanced to explain the meaning and origin of the name 'Akoko.' One of such explanations is said to be connected with the period of early settlement when the various towns and villages 'gathered together.'[39]Another interpretation is 'Ako-ko-tun-ko', which is said to have originated during the Ibadan raids of the 1850s, as the place was densely populated from where many people could be captured and enslaved. The Ibadan army carried many slaves from the area, hence the name of '*Ako-ko-tun-ko,*' meaning: 'to gather and re-gather together.' [40] Ako-ko-tun-ko was later contracted to Akoko.[41]The third interpretation is connected with the period of migration of the people of Akoko from Ife among those who trace their origin to that city. As a group of the migrants leave Ife, it is claimed that they shared in the enormous booty of Oduduwa and migrated to the hills of the Akoko country.[42]

It is said that most of the Akoko towns and villages trace their origin to Ife, Benin or Kabba in Kwara State. Ikare traditions claim that the founders of Oka, Ikare, Boropa and

---

[37]Omosanya, 'The Olowo of Owo chieftaincy.'

[38] Because of some similarities between the titles of Arinjale of Ise-Ekiti and Awujale of Ijebu-Ode, Monsignor Oguntuyi inaccurately says that the Ise-Ekiti people are an offshoot of the Obanta dynasty of Ijebu-Ode. For this, see Monsignor A.O. Oguntuyi, The History of Ado-Ekiti, part 1, Ibadan, 1979: 3. Oguntuyi cites Abraham, R.C., Dictionary of Modern Yoruba, and London, 1958, as his source.

[39] Akomolafe, 'Akoko-Owo Relations Under Colonial Rule,' 1977:8

[40] In the same way, the name Kukuruku, the old name for Afenmai district could be traced to the period of Nupe raids of the late 19th century in Akoko –Edo districts. This meaning is highly speculative and tenuous at best as it smacks of rationalization.

[41] Informant: Archdeacon J.L. Akeredolu, St. Andrew's Vicarage, Imola Street, Owo, age, 68, interviewed by Akomolafe on 06/10/71

[42] Informant: Chief Sajowa Arogunyo of Afa, age 105, interviewed by Akomolafe on 11/19/71

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Owo left Ife at the same time, around the 12th century. At Iyere, Owo stopped while Oka, Ikare and Boropa are said to have continued their journey to the Akoko country.[43] Thus, these three Akoko settlements were among the earliest settlements in the Akoko country.[44] Such traditions of descent from Ife, Benin or Kabba abound among the Akoko settlements. For example, in Isua, there is a tradition that the people came from Benin because the local dialect bears close resemblance to the Edo language while some Isua chieftaincy titles, institutions or burial customs are a replica of those found in Benin. [45] Similarly, Daja, Ojo, and a few other villages collectively known as Ajowa[46] in the northern boundary speak dialects closely akin to those spoken in Kabba and Iyagba districts in Kwara State. These traditions claim that dissatisfaction with conditions of living in the places of origin was the chief cause of migration of these Akoko peoples. While some of the migrations arose from disputes over land on which they could settle and farm unmolested, others came as a result of disputes over succession to titles in Benin or Ife, while others were yet the result of local wars.[47] In other words, the people migrated into the Akoko hills where conditions seemed to offer good prospects for freedom of action and a better life. When they arrived at this frontier zone in the Akoko country, they looked for accessible areas where their needs for good lands could be met.

---

[43] NAI: Beeley, J. H. Intelligence Report on Akoko Districts, 1934, Para. 6, p. 17

[44] Informant: John Oluwagbemi of Ilepa Quarter, Ikare, aged 55, interviewed by Akomolafe, C.O., on 9/23/71

[45] For instance, each chieftaincy titles as Osere, Ajana, Ologboshere, Olisa, Ojomo and Eribo are found in Isua. These titles have Benin equivalents. Osere, Ajana, Ojomo and Olisa are Esere, Agana, Ezomo and Oliha respectively in Benin. See Egharevba, J.U., A Short History, 13.

[46] Ajowa is a collective name by which villages comprising Akunu, Daja, Ojo, Gedegede, Ora and Uro are known. The name literally means 'we come together and its creation dated from the formation of the Town Planning Authority in that area in 1957. The new settlement occupies the former sites of the Daja/Ojo settlements. For this see, Akomolafe, C. O., 'Akoko-Owo Relations Under Colonial Rule,' M.A. Thesis, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, 1977:7.

[47] Beeley, J.H., Intelligence Report on Akoko, Para. 64, see also Akintoye, The Northeastern Yoruba Districts,' p. 543.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

They occupied the valley spots, the more open forests and the lowland areas, hence these settlements are all scattered all over the area.[48]

From available evidence, it appears that the migrants found in their settlements people who have been living on the land prior to their arrival. These earlier settlers were either conquered or absorbed by the immigrants. Most of the villages have traditions indicating that there were some earlier settlers on the land when they arrived. For instance, in Isua, there is a tradition which says that the Isua settlers, who migrated from Benin called the Ukunumi, met some people known as the Osonu at their present abode and lived side by side with them until the new comers either conquered or absorbed them and then the Ukunumi adopted the name Isua.[49] It is not known, however, if the absorbed people were earlier settlers themselves to the area or they were autochthones.

Three patterns can be observed in these migrations. There were those who left their places of origin, for example, Ife, Benin or Kabba (Iyagba) and came directly to settle in one place or the other in the Akoko country. These settlers arrived with some of the traditional practices and traits of their place of origin without any modifications and settled in their new place of abode in Akoko. Another pattern observable in these migrations is that after leaving their places of origin, some of the migrants first settled at another place on their way to the Akoko country. In so doing, these migrants carried some of the traditions and practices of these transit places where they had sojourned en route Akoko to where they later found themselves. These traditions and traits include the languages of the people with which they were in contact before they arrived in Akoko. And finally, there were those who, after leaving their places of origin, settled in Akoko.

---

[48] Akomolafe, 'Akoko-Owo Relations under Colonial Rule,' 8.
[49] Informant: Chief Shaba, a retired civil servant, aged 65. interviewed by Akomolafe on 07/29/71

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Because of their proximity to certain linguistic groups in their new home, they became acculturated to their neighbors, because of their contact with such groups, in their dialects, dance and even burial customs.

Based on the above, Akomolafe lists five groups of migrants into the Akoko area. First were those who claim to have migrated directly from Ife about the same time as the people of Owo around the 12th century. These people carried with them some of the cultural traits of their place of origin, particularly the Yoruba language. The settlements in this group include Afo, Akungba, Boropa, Ikare, Ikun, Oba, Oka, Supare, Ugbe, Ifira and Ikpesi. Both Ifira and Ikpesi traditions say that the two villages originated from Ife.[50] This seems to contradict Akintoye's position which says that Ifira and Ikpesi originated from Benin.[51] Akintoye's position is probably based on Beeley's conclusion that these villages must have originated from Benin.[52]

In the second category of settlements are those who claim to have migrated from Ile-Ife with certain Ekiti towns at about the 13th to the 14th century. These people settled with the other migrants and because of their proximity to some linguistic influences, they took on the cultural traits of the people nearest to their settlements. For instance, Ajana, the titular head of Afa in Oke-Agbe area, claims that the Afa people migrated from Ife but first settled at Ikole for about two centuries before migrating to their present abode. Similarly, the Osula of Erusu and a group of his palace chiefs claim that Erusu migrated from Ifira via Ikole. They migrated to their present settlement as a result of a succession

[50] Informant: Oba J. A. Adesunloye, the Onifira of Ifira, age, 60 and a group of his village chiefs, 09/28/82; Mr. Solomon Babajide of Ikpesi, age 110, 4/8/72.
[51] Akintoye, S.A., The Northeastern Yoruba Districts,' 1969: 540.
[52] Beeley, J. H., intelligence Report on Akoko, Para. 62 & 63.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

dispute at Ikole.[53] Villages in this group are Afin, Eshe, Irun, Ogbagi, Afo, Erusu, Arigidi, Igashi, Oyin and Omuo-Obadore. In some of these villages, Ekiti influence is strongly evident in dialects, folklores, music and dance. Some of them look more towards Ekiti than Akoko. Recently, there were agitations that Omuo should be merged with Ekiti.[54] One reason advanced by those who spearheaded this agitation was that Omuo is Ekiti by tradition and it was during the time of early British rule that it came under Ikole; it was initially in the Owo Divisional administration as part of the Akoko country. This linguistic and cultural affinity with Ekiti is undoubtedly the product of their location during the time of settlement and not of their place of origin as Beeley has suggested.[55]

The third group consists of those villages which claim to have migrated directly from Benin. These people like the Ife immigrants, left Benin around the 13th century or thereabouts and came directly to their new settlements in the Akoko country carrying with them some of the relics of the Edo/Benin culture in language, dress, marriage and burial customs. Villages in this group include Isua, Epinmi, Upe and Sosan.

The fourth group consists of those villages that left Benin, their place of origin, but first stayed in the Afenmai (Kukuruku) districts before finally migrating to the Akoko country. Settlements in this group are those of Ise, Kakumo, and Auga, all in the northeast corner of the Akoko country. Even though these people could claim Benin origin, their local dialect is not akin to Bini but Ayanran in the Afenmai (Kukuruku) country with which they had contact during their period of migration. In actual fact, all the four villages, Ayanran, Ise, Kakumo and Auga, have many commonalities.

---

[53] Informant: Oba L. A. Bagbitan, the Osula of Erusu, age, 55; Momo Awaiye, the leader of the Moslem Society, age 80; Chief Olugbede, Age 80, all interviewed on 09/29/72

[54] This agitation was considered in 1968 when Omuo was transferred to Ekiti North Division.

[55] Beeley, Intelligence Report on Akoko, Para. 2.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The last group consists of the Akunu, Daja, Ojo, Esuku, Gedegede, Ikeram and Omuo-Oke. This group drew their people from Kabba and Iyagba districts. Some of the dialects spoken in these settlements closely resemble the Iyagba dialects.

In summary, it will be noted that because of the frontier situation of these groups, each of them speaks different dialects which could be said to be influenced by their place of origin or the product of their proximity to certain linguistic areas. While the Benin immigrants speak dialects which are relics of the Edo (Benin) language, as well as the dialects of the people close to their location in this frontier area, the Ife immigrants speak at least two separate, though, not dissimilar dialects of Yoruba. The Yoruba language is reminiscent of both their place of origin and current location. Similarly, the Kabba or Iyagba immigrants speak two main dialects which reflect the ones spoken by the Owo, Iyagba, and Gbedde (the last two being people from modern Kwara state). But no matter how diverse the local dialects of the Akoko people might be Yoruba constitutes the dominant language or *lingua franca* of the culture area known as Akoko. Thus, the Akoko, like the dominant Owo people of the area, are the products of an agglomeration of peoples who had migrated and settled in this frontier area which seems to serve as a meeting ground for diverse peoples and cultures from the west, east and north. [56]

From the foregoing, we can see that the people who came to settle in the Owo area can be grouped into two broad categories: those who are native or indigenous to the area and have lived there from time immemorial. The other category is made up of immigrants who are divisible into three groups. The first group came from their homes, moved by a factor that was common in early Yoruba history: movement of adventurous persons in

[56] Akintoye, 'The Northeast Yoruba Districts,' 543.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

quest of new homes in unoccupied territory in search of freedom from molestation, opportunities for a new beginning, farmlands, etc.

The second group are some of the people leaving their well established communities and going away in protest (often, because they lost chieftaincy contests). This was also common in Yoruba history. Rulers and their chiefs were afraid of losing people to such protests and therefore annually offered sacrifices to the gods to shield their town from so losing people. Rulers also made sacrifices asking the gods to bring to them disgruntled people who were emigrating from other communities. To attract such emigrants, rulers would usually offer their leaders chieftaincy titles (often the very titles which they had lost in their original homes)

The third group were non-Yoruba speaking immigrants from the east – i.e. from Benin. Many of these were political outcasts, such as Irere who was contesting with his father over his wives, rebellious people, criminals, etc, fleeing from Benin. But others were Benin traders or agents of rich traders, out to take advantage of the growing trade between Benin and the Yoruba country. There were also non-Yoruba, non-Benin speaking immigrants from the territory of the confluence of the Rivers Niger/Benue, for example, the Ijumu district, discussed earlier.[57]

It seems that the Owo area had a strong pull for people from Oyo, Ife, Benin and Iyagba districts. The stories of immigration into the Owo area indicate that large tracts of forest land were unoccupied when Owo was a young community, especially the far eastern parts of the kingdom where many settlements later proliferated and packed themselves into a small area. The forest country between Benin and the Ifon area was the

[57] For example, Ijumu in Iyagba district.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

thickest forest in the Yoruba-Edo world. The old road connecting Benin to the clump of settlements in the Ifon area was the longest forest path in ancient times. Yoruba folklore is replete with stories and legends of the journey through this long forest road called *Ona Ado* (the Benin road). It seems probable that migrants eastwards from parts of Yorubaland were stopped here by the great forest, so that many small immigrant communities ended up living close to one another. Another reason has to do with the invisible barrier created by ethnic considerations such as language and cultural dissimilarities. On the other side of the ethnic divide, political outcasts from the Benin kingdom, fleeing Benin, seem to have settled in the same area, happy to put the great forest between them and Benin power as the authority of Benin could not overcome the invisible ethnic barriers. The popular roads connecting Benin with Owo and the rest of Yorubaland avoided this great forest and lay generally to the north (the Akoko-Edo territory) where the higher hilly country resulted in lighter vegetation. That is why Benin expansionism, demographically and politically, affected the Akoko-Edo area more profoundly, as the Benin continued to expand westwards, looking for weaker spots in the ethnic barrier to penetrate. When Owo became a noticeable city and trade developed between her and Benin, most of the connecting roads were through the Akoko–Edo territories - mainly through Idoani which, consequently, became a trading center of considerable importance.

These cultural aspects add to the relevant issues raised in this study and they also have some connection with the political and economic issues raised in the research questions. They touch on the similarities, but more fundamentally, on the differences between the Owo Yoruba and their Edo neighbors as that was what provided the basis for

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the frontier. The area where the Owo fronted the Benin kingdom was an ethnic frontier in an internal African setting. Their antecedence or points of origin and later interaction provide the bases for the two peoples' similarities (the Yoruba and Edo in this frontier zone). But the differences which stemmed from their two languages, social structure and organization, types of lineage structures and forms of government are also apparent. Later, in this discussion, we shall see the effects of the differences on the political and economic lives of the people of Owo and how they had to negotiate these differences in their dealings with the Benin kingdom. Some Owo people, such as the kings, traders and adventurers introduced the Benin style of governance and became interlocutors for Benin in the Yoruba country. For example, as the Benin people were avid traders, Owo people also copied that trait and they became avid traders. That may partly explain the basis for Owo's relative prosperity vis-à-vis the other Yoruba sub-groups in this area.

From the foregoing, it appears that the location of the Owo kingdom has prepared her for her role as a point of refuge where many talents converged and human diversity became welded to form a new type of Yoruba culture, one in which the genius of the Yoruba people could be exhibited in the creation of wealth and the practice of diplomacy. The next chapter discusses the chronology of events in Owo's early history leading to her interaction with the Benin kingdom.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Infant kingdom: the early history of Owo

Chronology and the problem of authenticity in the early history of Owo

One of the difficulties in dealing with the early history of Owo concerns the lack of a reliable chronology and the problem of authenticating the dates suggested by earlier writers.[1] Apart from Beeley's 'Intelligence Report,'[2] no written record exists on the history of Owo until 1945.[3] Beeley's Intelligence report says that Owo history began in the 12th century with the arrival of a hunter, named Ojugbelu and his band of warriors including one of his sons named Imade and the twelve Ighare chiefs.

One source of corroborative evidence for events in Owo history can be found in the history of the Benin kingdom, Owo's neighbor to the southeast. Owo has had a long history of artistic, cultural and political relationship with the Benin Kingdom and because some measure of chronology has been achieved in the study of Benin's history,[4] reference to events and activities of important personalities in the history of Benin can throw some light on the history of Owo. As a result, a comparison of contemporary events in Owo and Benin can help our understanding of Owo's early history. Such comparisons constitute a major factor in any attempt to achieve some chronology for the history of Owo. The period between the reign of Olowo Renrengenjen, c1345-c1386, and the reign

[1] Ashara, Elerewe and the Ighares of Iloro quarter have left us some lists of early Olowos. See Table 1.
[2] NAI: Beeley, 'Intelligence Report on Owo/Ifon Districts,' CSO 26/ 299566, 1934.
[3] NAI: Owo Division, 1/1, File 776, Serial No. 817: 2; Adedipe Elewuokun is said to have ruled as Olowo from c1781 to c1833. See Ashara, The History.
[4] Bradbury, R. E., 'Chronological Problems in Benin History,' JHSN, #1, 1, 1959

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of Omaro, 1578-c1600, coincides with the period when Benin was at the zenith of its power. [5]

The specimens of terra cotta heads recovered from archaeological excavations in Owo by Ekpo Eyo in 1971 have been carbon dated to between c1435 to c1755, a period of almost three hundred years.[6] Archaeologists have recently recovered these specimens from the Oronsen shrine at Igbo'laja, Owo. The two dates of c1435 and c1755 fall within the probable time period of early Owo history and so may help us to understand the chronology of events in early Owo. Beginning from c1365, the Olowo worshipped the goddess Oronsen at the Igbo'laja grove during the annual Igogo festival rite.

Owo traditions have it that this festival, the Olowo's biggest ritual celebration of each year, was started during the reign of Olowo Renrengenjen. Ashara dates his reign to between c1340 and c1380A.D. The Igbo'laja shrine came into existence sometime after the inauguration of the Igogo festival. Ekpo Eyo's specimens, therefore, would seem to belong to some early time in the history of the Igogo festival, some time, which, in the light of Ashara's dates for Renrengenjen's reign, would be about a century after Renrengenjen. The archaeological dates, therefore, would seem to confirm the Ashara date and in general strengthen the authenticity and authority of the whole Ashara chronology.

Periodization and Kings' lists

But it is his division of the history of Owo into periods that continues to create some problems in our understanding of his work. In his book, Ashara has divided the history of

---

[5] Egharevba, A Short History, 14

[6] Prof. Ekpo Eyo has a letter dated May 27, 1971 from James Buckley of the Teledyne Isotopes Westwood Laboratories, 50 Van Buren Ave, Westwood, NJ giving these two carbon dates.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Owo into three broad periods which he calls dynasties. His first dynasty comprises the period before the arrival of the immigrants from Ile-Ife under Ojugbelu and Imade, the period when many small communities inhabited the site of Owo, each under a ruler of its own. His second dynasty starts with the coming of Ojugbelu and later his son, Imade, in the twelve century and ends in the late eighteenth century. And his third period starts in about c1781AD with a ruler named Adedipe (with the cognomen Elewu-Okun) and continues to our times. Ashara provides a list of Owo kings to support his periodization:

Table 1

Owo kings' list showing Ashara's dynasties.

First Dynasty	**The Second Dynasty**	**Third dynasty**
Elefene of Efene	Ojugbelu	Adedipe
Olomu of Omu	Imade	Orimolade
Olutelu of Utelu	Kodo	Adara (Ajari)
Osen of Ode-Osen	Agwobojoro	Aladetuohun
Oligherepe of Igherepe-Idan	Dondon	Atanleye I
	Adegberin	Ogunoye I
	Opa	Olagbegi I
	Asunsola	Atanleye II
	Renrengenjen	Olagbegi II
	Asunsoma	Ogunoye II
	Ogeja	(Olagbegi II) returns
	Imagele	Olagbegi III
	Alamunren	
	Omasan	
	Omaro	
	Oshogboye	
	Alubiolokun	
	Otutu-biosun	
	Ajagbusi-Ekun	
	Farokun or Ajaka	

Ashara's list of Owo kings is predated by another list written in the 1920s by Chief Elerewe Adekanye, (Elerewe Agba or Elerewe, the elder), in his Private Notes, and later made public by his grandson, the Elerewe Abraham Ojo Olakunori. Coming decades

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

after the Elerewe list, the Ashara list provides fewer details than the Elerewe list. Unfortunately, the source of much of the details in the Ashara list is uncertain, especially with regards to the number of years assigned to the reigns. Consequently, the Elerewe list, publicized in the 1960s, is generally accepted as more reliable by informed Owo citizens.

We do have yet another kings' list – one provided by the Ighare chiefs of the Iloro Quarter. The Ighare chiefs are traditionally the custodians of the history of the Owo kingdom. It is therefore not a matter of little importance that their list of the earlier kings of Owo differs markedly and considerably from that of Ashara. Until Oshogboye, generally believed to have reigned in the seventeenth century, the two lists differ. It is significant, however, that Oshogboye is the sixteenth king in both lists and this seems to suggest the possibility that what we are encountering here is differences in the names, rather than in the persons, of the pre-Oshogboye rulers. It is conceivable that the Ighare chiefs have preserved the original names of the earlier rulers, while Ashara has picked up their names as modified by later traditions. Given the relatively close correspondence of the Ashara and the Elerewe lists and dates, it seems Ashara relied on the same sources as the Elerewe. As stated above, Ashara used the sources supplied by the elders of Owo and the incumbent chief Elerewe Olakunori, who was the doyen of Owo elders and, in fact, the *Olori-Ebi* Omolowo (head of the descendants of the Olowos) in the 1940s and the 1950s.

Table II

The three king lists by Ashara, Elerewe and the Ighare Chiefs.

Ashara	**Elerewe**	**Ighares of Iloro Quarter**
1. Ojugbelu, 1000	Ojugbelu, 1019-1070	Alaghare, (died at Upafa)
2. Imade, 1070	Imade, 1070-1106	Erinmi, (died at Upafa
3. Kodo, 1106	Kodo, 1106-1156	Ojugbelu, (died at Upafa)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

4. Agwobojoro, 1265	Agwobojoro, 1156-1209	Kese (died at Okemade)
5. Dondan, 1283	Dondan, 1209-1260	Opa
6. Adegbemi, 1313	Adegberin, 1260-1305	Ogbuya,
7. Opa, 1329	Opa, 1305-1332	Renrengenjen
8. Asunsola, 1331	Asunsola, 1332-1340	Asunsola
9. Reregenjen, 1345	Ringinjin, 1340-1346	Imagele
10. Asunsoma, 1380	Asunsoma1346-1386	Aketuta or Atekuta
11. Ogeja, 1398	Ogeja, 1386-1430	Kodo
12. Imagele, 1430	Imagele, 1430-1481	Asunsoma
13. Alamunren, 1462	Alamunren, 1481-1539	Ogeja
14. Omasan, n.d.	Omasan, 1539-1578	Amasan
15. Omaro, 1534	Omaro, 1578-1600	Omaro
16. Oshogboye, 1600	Oshogboye, 1600-1648	Oshogboye
17. Alubiolokun, 1648	Alubiolokun, 1648-1690	Ogiren
18. Otutuboson, 1690	Otutubosun, 1690-1719	Adobolokun
19. Ajagbusi-Ekon, 1719	Ajagbusi-Ekun, 1719-1760	Otutubosun
20. Ajaka, 1760	Ajaka, 1760-1781	Ajagbusi –Ekun
21. Elewu-Okun, 1781	Elewuoku, 1781-1833	Ajaka
22. Aghagunlaiye, 1833	Aghagunlaiye, 1833-1876	Elewu-Okun
23. Adara, 1876	Adara, 1876-1880	Orimolade Aghagunghaye
24. Aladetohun, 1880	Aladetohun, 1880-1889	Adaramola/Adaranijoja
25. Atanleye, 1, 1889	Atanleye 1, 1889-1902	Aladetohun
26. Ogunoye 1, 1902	Ogunoye 1902-1913	Atanleye I
27. Olagbegi 1, 1913	Olagbegi 1 1913-1938	Ogunoye I
28. Atanleye 11 1938	Atanleye 11, 1938-1940	Olagbegi I
29. Olagbegi 11, 1941	Sir Olagbegi 11 1941-1968	Atanleye II
30. Ogunoye11, 1968	Ogunoye 11	Ogunoye II
Olateru (returns)	Olateru, 1993-1998	Olateru Olagbegi II
31. Folagbade, 2000	Folagbade	Folagbade Olagbegi III

**I wish to thank Prof. Rowland Abiodun of Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts, for providing these lists of the Olowos

This periodization by Ashara employs, of course, his suggested chronology for the history of the Owo kingdom. As earlier pointed out, Ashara's chronology seems to have some merit to it. So also does his king list, more or less, authenticated as it is by various bodies of Owo traditions. However, his concept of dynasty is unclear. In what sense, for instance, can the many rulers of the early indigenous communities be considered, together, as a dynasty? And since Owo traditions have it that the same royal family has ruled Owo since Imade, how does one categorize some minor shift in political fortunes, in that family, the origin of a new dynasty? Like Jacob Egharevba, the writer of the history of Benin, Ashara obviously felt the need to provide some periodization for Owo's history. However, his scheme of three dynasties is patently inapt

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

That does not mean that the history of Owo kingdom lack well defined periods. Based on the result of our investigation of this issue, we find that Owo history has well defined periods, and this present work will attempt to delineate those periods. The first period consists of the pre-Imade times - that is, from the earliest human settlement in Owo until a dominant body of immigrants came from Ife, led by Imade. The distinctive character of this earliest period is that many small settlements, each with its own name, some autochthonous to the area and some early immigrants, shared a small area among them, lived under their different rulers, established little or no contacts with one another and, occasionally, engaged in hostilities against one another.

The second period starts with the coming of Imade and his people - a much larger body of people than the earlier settlers, a group with definite ideas of government derived from the kingdom of Ife. A group, moreover, in possession of more advanced technologies. The first years of this new era in Owo was marked by the efforts of the new comers to assimilate the earlier settlements. The new comers found themselves engaged in conflicts with many enemies from many directions. While there was no doubt among the new comers as to which was their ruling family, the widely explosive conflicts with many hostile settlements tended to give much prominence to many leading personages in the group, as their energies were employed in fighting in all directions. As a result, a cadre of very strong and influential chiefs arose, and their emergence tended to dim the stature of the king and the royal family. The king became more or less like the first among many equals. A close perusal of the traditions shows that this period continued until about the beginning of the reign of Renrengenjen, the ninth Olowo on the Ashara

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

list, about the middle of the 14th century. The period from Imade to the beginning of Renrengenjen, therefore, constitutes our second period.

With the gradual suppression and assimilation of the earlier settlements, with the growth of population through natural increase and continual immigrations, and with the expansion of human settlement until all the communities merged to become a sizeable town, the monarchical institution could at last begin to reveal its true face.

From Renrengenjen to Asunsoma to Ogeja, the kings were engaged in an effort to elevate the kingship to its true position- with the highest chiefs resisting. One very resourceful king, Ogeja, took the struggle to great success. From his time, the institution of king was supreme in Owo's political life. Even though some resistance persisted for sometime, the king from then on was supreme ruler. [7] This then, ends an important period in Owo's history. Ashara dates the beginning of Ogeja's reign to c1398AD. The Elerewe assigns the dates: c1386-c1430AD, to his reign. This period, the third period, ends at this point.

The fourth period starts with Ogeja's successor, Imagele, and is characterized by Benin pressure. Under Imagele, the first Benin invasions of Owo, occurred. The Benin invasions greatly impacted the constitutional developments in the Owo kingdom as Owo people rallied round their king to defend their kingdom, against a powerful enemy. Even when military defeat came, the kings were able to hold their kingdom together in impressive order, and to negotiate with Benin arrangements which ensured, not merely the survival of the kingdom, but also its growth and prosperity.

[7] Owo's own version of what the Yoruba people call Alase, Ekeji Orisa (Commander, lieutenant of the gods) was born.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Imagele thus witnessed the first Benin invasion of the Owo kingdom. For over two centuries, Benin and Owo had grown closer and closer in commerce and culture. About c1430AD, Oba Ewuare of Benin sent an army to the invasion of Owo. The Benin army was led by a certain Iken, a man reputed to have been a talented warrior but, at home, a political thorn in Ewuare's flesh. The Benin invasion obviously quenched Owo's internal political troubles. Imagele rallied his people to resist and defeat the invaders. Iken himself died in battle. The Benin invasions continued, however, and ultimately compelled the Owo rulers to enter into some sort of accommodation with Benin. This Benin period came to an end with the coming of Oshogboye who firmly and finally repulsed the Benin.

With Oshogboye, then, the fifth period opened, marked by independence, growth of trade, of the arts and of military power. It was in this period that the Owo people began to expand their kingdom by conquering some of their neighbors. This period continues until the end of the 18th century.

A sixth period begins at the opening of the 19th century and continues until the end of that century. This period was marked by wars which engulfed Yorubaland. In it all, Owo, employing the diplomatic skills she had learnt in her long history of survival as neighbor of the powerful Benin kingdom, managed not merely to survive but actually to prosper, even though she had to retreat from the outlying territories which she had conquered in the earlier period.

The seventh period covers the 20th century, the period of British rule and independent Nigeria. Owo had to learn to survive under British rule and has played significant parts in the life of independent Nigeria.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

An Interlude of Benin Rulers of Owo?

One final point needs to be made concerning this issue of periodization of Owo's history. Owo traditions seem all agreed in asserting that only one ruling family has ruled the Owo kingdom since its foundation by Imade. However, in a recent Master's degree thesis submitted to the Department of History, University of Lagos (1977), Awe disputes this assertion,[8] Awe claims that it appears that the original Ojugbelu –Imade line was interrupted about the mid fourteenth century by a line of Edo kings emanating from Benin. According to Awe, the first of these Edo kings was Renrengenjen, the ninth king on the Ashara list. After Renrengenjen, came, in order, Asunsoma, Ogeja, Imagele, Alamunren, Omasan and Omaro, after whom the Imade line returned in the person of Oshogboye, the sixteenth king in the Ashara list, just before c1602AD. If Awe were correct, then the period of the Edo interlude would cover about two centuries.

Table 111 Awe's schema (1977)

(Yoruba)	(The Edo interlude)	(Yoruba)
1. Ojugbelu, 1019	9. Renrengenjen, 1340	16. Oshogboye, c1602
2. Imade, 1070	10. Asunsoma, 1380	17. Alubiolokun, 1648
3. Kodo, 1106	11. Ogeja, 1386	18. Otutu-bioson, 1690
4. Agwobojoro, 1156	12. Imagele, 1430	19. Ajagbusi-Ekon, 1719
5. Dondon, 1209	13. Alamunren, 1481	20. Farokun aka Ajaka, 1760
6. Adegberin, 1260	14. Omasan, 1539	21. Adedipe Elewu-Okun
7. Opa, 1305	15. Omaro, 1576_	22. Orimolade, 1876
8. Asunsola, 1332		23. Adara, 1876
		24. Aladetuohun, 1880
		25. Atanneye I, 1889
		26. Ogunoye I, 1902
		27. Olagbegi I, 1913
		28. Atanneye II, 1938
		29. Olagbegi II, 1941
		30. Ogunoye II, 1968
		31. Olagbegi III

[8] Solomon Harrison Ajayi Awe, 'Owo kingdom from the Earliest Times,' M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Lagos, Lagos, 1977

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Awe bases his suggestion entirely on the fact that the names of these seven kings of his Benin interlude are Edo, not Yoruba, names. While the names do sound Edo rather than Yoruba, however, it is of great importance that Owo traditions do not preserve knowledge of such a significant period of foreign kings on the Owo throne, though it is not surprising, given the practice of oral traditions which tend to weed out unpleasant memories from their record. However, in the case of Owo, in the circumstance, more plausible explanations would seem to be in order for the intrusion of these foreign names into the traditional list of Owo kings. One possibility, and this may appear speculative, is that some, at least, three of these seven names might not have been Edo names at all but Yoruba names corrupted by Edo linguistic influence. Thus, Asunsoma, Omasan and Omaro are, in fact, Yoruba names –Asunsomo, Omosan and Omoro. By the 15th century, more than two centuries of commercial, cultural and other contacts between Owo and her Edo neighbors to the southeast had considerably impacted Owo's culture and, in particular, rubbed off strongly on Owo's Yoruba dialect and personal names not only of Owo princes but also of the general population. More significantly, there are Owo palace traditions which claim that, in the era of Benin's greatness, some Owo kings assumed Edo, or Edo sounding cognomens in order to appear lofty like the Obas of Benin.[9] Some even hurried, after being installed on the Owo throne, to court friendships with their Benin counterparts and thereafter boast that they were friends or brothers or (depending on their comparative ages) even sons of the Oba of Benin. As probable confirmation of these doings of the Olowos, we do know, as will be shown later, that Renrengenjen's

[9] Even in the 19th century which is very close to our times, Orimolade assumed the name, 'Aghagunghaye,' meaning, 'The one who distributes battles as he distributes titles.' This is definitely an Edo cognomen/name and he preferred to be known by that appellation. It is the custom of pre-colonial Yoruba rulers to prefer a high sounding appellation to their real Yoruba names.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

reign marked the beginning of a period when the Olowo as an institution began markedly to pull away from, and rise above, the other high chieftaincies in the evolving polity, a development which provoked much resistance from the other high chieftaincies. By taking Edo, lofty names, the Olowos appear to have been trying to assert the sort of dominance in their kingdom that the Oba of Benin enjoyed in his. A detailed account of Benin's influence on Owo belongs to a later chapter. Suffice it to say at this point that Awe's postulates of some intrusion of Benin personages onto the Owo throne in the 14th and 15th centuries are not supported by oral traditions.

Early period of Owo History: Imade Founds Owo

We now turn to a fuller consideration of the eras of early Owo history symbolized by the kings or Olowos. In this attempt, we start with a discussion of the first Olowo, Imade, who is said to be the founder of the Owo kingdom. Not much personal information is provided by the sources on this ruler and even less can be recalled by those interviewed in Owo about him. Owo traditions, however, remember that some years after Imade became the ruler and, because of the raids from the pre-existing settlements under the leadership of the Olomu, on the one hand and the incessant occurrence of thunder and lightning, on the other, Imade felt that it would be unsafe for him to make Upafa his permanent place of abode. The party, therefore, moved from Upafa and traveled northeastwards until they got to a well watered place, about five miles south of the present site of Owo town, called 'omi funfun (clear or white water). Here they settled and named it Okemade in honor of the leader of the group, Imade. There were other settlements all around and nearby and they all started to co-exist in the area. [10]

[10] The other settlements in the area at the time are: Igherepe-idan, Iyere, Igbe, Upo, Ujelu, Okese, Umoje and Ode-Osen.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

After a few years and the Okemade settlement had increased in population, it seems that the new comers then began to be viewed as threats by the older settlements in the area. The traditions say that Imade and his Ighare chiefs had to wage a series of wars against these settlements. These fights brought the new comers face to face with more settler communities who claimed to have more rights to the ownership of the land. About five miles to the north of Okemade lived the Efenes, Utas and the Ujos. The old nemesis of the migrants, the Olomu of Omu, later linked up with the Elefene, the Obata and the Obajo to wage wars of attrition against Imade's people. Imade later moved his settlement to a site later named Okiti Asegbo, the former seat of the Elefene, (which he vacated as he was fleeing from the Imade group). This new settlement was named Ogho (Owo) in commemoration, according to the traditions, of the blessing Ojugbelu received from his father, Oduduwa, before he left Ile-Ife and the new settlement quickly grew and, as a result, most of the neighboring villages decided to move closer into it for fear of being attacked or for protection against enemies. [11] Owo then became a place of refuge and, according to our sources, 'it continued to grow daily.' [12] It appears from the traditions that Owo people started to develop a distinctive culture in dialect, social structure and organization, laws and their unwritten constitution from this time period. Thus, the reign of Imade marks the beginning of a process of state building in this part of Yorubaland. Hitherto, the pattern of settlement had been the village and the hamlet type but with the

[11] For example, Iyere was deserted for Owo but the people of Iyere had to return to their village because it was not expedient for every body to be on the same site in case of attack by enemies who then surrounded the fledgling Owo kingdom. The Iyere village group and their leaders: Urogho under the Ayere (first among all Oliyere), Ujima under the Ogunma Elegba, Ukiti under the Ajegunma, Igbe under the Ajelu Olisa, Upo under the Elemile, Ujelu under the Ajelu, Okese under the Olokese, Umoje under the Amoje. Chief Oliyere Takuma, 1965.

[12] From that time till our times, each successive Olowo must send a man and a woman to live there and take care of the Ogho gods at Okemade.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

coming of the new Ife people, a new kind of settlement pattern, urban and cosmopolitan, started to emerge.

Imade is perhaps the most commonly remembered of all Olowos. Today the name of Imade is almost synonymous with Owo.[13] Owo people generally refer to themselves and are referred to by others as the children of Imade. The oldest post–primary institution in Owo is named after Imade.[14] Imade moved the site of Owo and most of the neighboring villages about six miles away to Okiti-Asegbo, a site later known as *Igbo-Ogwata*, (the forest where the king danced), where the Owo Town Hall now stands. It is possible that Imade chose this site for its defensive vantage point in order to make sure that he was safe from the spell of Olomu

The Early or Mythical Olowos

Thirty-one Olowos have reigned since Ojugbelu is said to have left Ife in the 12th century, with Oba Folagbade Olagbegi III, being thirty first.[15] Some of these are remembered as culture heroes who are said to have provided Owo people with niceties and conveniences of civilization. For example, the third Olowo, Kodo, is said to have introduced clay oil-lamp in terra cotta vessels, used as lamps. Agwobojoro used stone axes as weapons and is said to have invented the use of flints for starting fires. Some among these early Olowos are said to have introduced important cultural phenomena. Agwobojoro, for example, introduced the worship of ogun, the Yoruba god of iron and is said to have revived the cult of Esu, the messenger of the gods.[16] Adegberin, the sixth Olowo, introduced the cult of Uja, the god of hunting. Some Olowos are known merely

[13] cf. Owo-Imade.
[14] Imade College, Owo, established in 1946 and named after the founder of the kingdom, Imade, remains the premier post primary educational institution in Owo. This writer is a proud product of this institution.
[15] See Appendix 2, p. 343
[16] Agwobojoro used stone axes and also introduced ogun worship, Ashara.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

for their weakness. The fifth Olowo, Dondon, was weak and lame and during his reign the government rested in the hands of the Iloro chiefs. Others rid Owo of powerful enemies. It was during the reign of Opa, the powerful seventh Olowo, that Elefene, the ruler of Efene, was finally done away with and that the servant who betrayed Elefene was given a title and a post among the Ighare chiefs of Iloro. [17]

Some Olowos introduced political changes into the area. But the traditions say only very little about the next six successive Olowos: Kodo, Agwobojoro, Odondon, Adegberin, Opa and Asunsola. Between the period spanning the reigns of Imade and Asunsola, Owo continued to organize her institutions and expand. As she grew, Owo started to gain some stability in the social, economic and political realms. By the time of Asunsola in the early 14th century, Owo had become a thriving township and in fact, her rulers had started to seek ways to expand their territory. References to wars of expansion against far-flung neighbors like Okeluse are reported and this seems to indicate that Owo was strong enough to accomplish some territorial acquisition and[18]she was also taking tributes from her subject states. [19] There are many objects–drums, metal gongs, cutlasses or machetes, pikes, spears and swords, which date back to this period, whose relics can be seen on display in the Owo Museum today. Some of these objects are highly sophisticated and could only have been used by a people who had attained some degree of social and economic advancement.

---

[17] The Olisa of Ogho or Olisa'gho was a servant or a brother of Elefene. He betrayed Elefene to the Owo people and because of that the holder of the Olisa'gho title greets the Olowo first among the Iloro Ighare chiefs and performs the actual crowning of the Olowo He is a link between the autochthonous regime of the Elefene and the new Imade dynasty.

[18] Okeluse traditions seem to suggest this early confrontation with Owo. The cause of the wars was Owo's territorial ambition and may be an attempt 'to lord it over' the Ojima of Okeluse.

[19] For example, Owo traditions say that Renrengenjen was on a punitive expedition against a neighboring subject state for failure to pay tribute when the disaster of Oronsen's expulsion from the palace occurred, vide Ashara, The History, and 1951: 13.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Owo traditions depict Kodo as a strong warrior but slow at arriving at a decision on matters of state. It is said that he lived a peaceful life but nothing of note occurred during his tenure as Olowo except the report that he invented the lamp known as kodo which came to replace the 'agudugbe,' naked brush torch. It appears that Kodo invented the lamp made from cotton moistened in oil on a whim. Hence this kind of illumination is called 'kodo' in Owo. To make a kodo, a piece of cotton or rag is put in a clay pot with a spout and filled with palm oil; it is lit at the spout. Before that time, agudugbe or native candles were used to provide illumination. On a certain occasion, according to legends, it happened that during the 'oro' (Ogho) festival, darkness suddenly fell and the people- the chiefs and their parties- could not find their way home because it was pitch dark and dangerous. It was then that the king Kodo introduced the clay pots and ordered that many of them be made and brought to the palace and distributed to the chiefs. He later instructed his aides to put these lamps in a row and at strategic points in the palace and town. Once they were lit up, they provided illumination for the public. Because of this and other reasons, it appears that the population of Owo steadily increased with the coming of many immigrants.

Agwobojoro, nicknamed 'Ate-okuta-gwo-yeghe,' ('steps-on-rocks–and-breaks-them'), is said to be a tall, powerfully built and handsome individual and in the sources, he appears like a giant because of his gait and height. When he waged war, he only had to haul stones at his enemies and he would vanquish them.[20] During his reign, Owo people started to worship the god of iron, '*Ogun.*' It was during this time also that the people of

[20] The art of making fire by striking two stones together is also ascribed to him. Because of the problem of starting fires in those days, it was the practice of the people not to extinguish their fire as it was very difficult to start a new one. So fire was kept going without stop but on one occasion, the fire went out. Agwobojoro then struck two stones together and with the flash it produced, he kindled a new fire. Ashara, The History.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Owo started to worship the god of '*Esu.*' A cult later developed around this fetish. Every household had its own Esu, an idol for the devil, in place outside the front yard of the family compound. It was in the courtyard or the front of the house that people worshipped their idol. Ogun and Esu are ancient Yoruba gods. It is unlikely that the Owo people started to worship them at this time. It may be nearer the truth to say that about this time, the Owo people began to give special prominence to the worship of these deities among the many that the Yoruba people worshipped. This is a common phenomenon in Yoruba history. For reasons not quite clear to us now, each Yoruba community, as it grew, gave prominence to the worship of this or that deity among the 401 that the Yoruba people believed in, in addition to local protector spirits (of a hill, a river or a departed ancestor) [21]

Dondon became the king upon the death of Agwobojoro. The traditions represent Dondon, the fourth Olowo on the Ashara list, as lame in both legs, (polio?), but give no indication as to the cause of his lameness but indicate that he got lame after his accession to the throne. All the known herbalists and doctors were called in to help cure him but all to no avail. He remained paralyzed and because of his handicap, the government of the kingdom fell into the hands of the Ighare chiefs of Iloro quarter, who constituted the inner council at that point.

It was during the time of Dondon that the question of twins (*ibeji)* came to the fore. It appears that in those days, it was forbidden for a woman to deliver two babies at the same time in Owo. Any woman who did that was separated from society and put in isolation in a booth outside the confines of the city for three months. The twins were destroyed since

[21] Like the Greeks, the Yoruba people had numerous gods, in some cases, the number was 400, 401 and in others, 600.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

it was believed that getting rid of the them purified the community from further calamities and misfortunes. [22]

At the death of Dondon, the Ighare chiefs were so powerful that the leading chieftain among them, the Adanigbo, was able to put his son, Adegberin, on the throne as the new Olowo. The Olowo Adegberin was never able to live above the fear of the Ighare chiefs, even though his roots went deep among them. Adegberin was an accomplished deep forest hunter before he came to the throne. All his life, he loved and practiced hunting. But he was so fearful of treachery by a number of his chiefs, the Ighare chiefs, that he kept his hunting forays to the forest of the palace grounds. Because of his love of hunting, Adegberin led his subjects to give special prominence to the worship of Uja, the Yoruba god who was the special patron of hunters. The Uja worship ceremony, featuring the special music band known as Agherebe, special hunters' dirges and intricate dance movements, and the frequent sacrifice of dogs, became a very influential ceremony in Owo. [23]

Owo traditions say that around that time, some of the formerly subdued settlements rose again against the Owos. Adegberin marched his forces against them and quickly subdued the rebels after two 'moons' (i.e. months) of severe fighting. As a result, many of the inhabitants of these rebelling settlements deserted their abodes and fled into the bush, while others found their way into Owo town and remained there. These people helped to swell the population of the town. Those who went to Owo during the wars became fearful

[22] It also seems that twins were not allowed to survive or live in Owo kingdom as this was considered an evil omen. There is a saying in Owo which describes the plight of the woman giving birth to twins: 'Igun ba le ori re,' meaning, 'Vultures have landed on her head.'

[23] When a noted hunter died, it was the Agherebe band that performed at the funeral obsequies while the other hunters played prominent roles in the funeral rites.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of going back to their villages; they thought that Adegberin might decide to invade them again. [24]

Asunsola, the eighth Olowo on the Ashara list, is said to have been in his thirties when he came to the throne, and to have had a long, peaceful and prosperous reign. In his time, many influential strangers arrived in Owo from various sources, each leading a sizeable group of followers. To encourage them to stay and swell Owo's population, Asunsola, after consultation with the Ighare chiefs, decided to give each of them all attractive chieftaincy titles. From these Chiefs, a new cadre of high chieftaincies emerged. Asunsola did these not with the intention of boosting and expanding his own powers, but for the purpose of increasing the population and strength of Owo. In later times in Owo's history, however, kings who desired to increase their personal power by creating chieftaincies for their sons or brothers or friends, usually quoted Asunsola's actions as precedent. Asunsola also created the new title of Oshodi, second in rank to the Olowo, and vested it in the leader of one of the earliest settlements at Igboroko quarter but he lived a little removed from the Olowo's palace to the southwest.

By Asunsola's time, then, the basic outline of the institution of Owo's monarchy had evolved. It was the same system common to all Yoruba kingdoms with slight local modifications. The Olowo was the exalted ruler of the Owo kingdom; hailed by his subjects as '*Alase, Ekeji Orisa,*' (Commander, the god's lieutenant on earth). He lived in a palace that was the very center and heart of the kingdom. By popular pronouncements of his subjects, the government was his government, he had the power of life and death over his subjects, and he was 'owner' of the land.

---

[24] Ashara, The History

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

By Asunsola' time, also, some of the popular practices had begun that would later surround the person of the Olowo with an unending halo of rituals, ceremonies and festivals. In public appearances, he wore the conical beaded crown with dangling frills that veiled his face, said to be the crown of Oduduwa. But the hard core of the government was the council of high chiefs, made up of the twelve Ighare chiefs that met daily at the palace to consider and decide on all state matters, and to act as the highest court in the land.

When this council had decided, its decisions were the king's decisions as far as the populace was concerned. The Yoruba king was not supposed to decide or act without this council. And this council was assisted by lower councils of chiefs down the line, as well as special chiefs who performed special duties – in rituals, warfare, management of the market place, liaison with rulers of outlying subordinate townships, villages and settlements, etc.

A special group of chiefs was also responsible for the selection of a king from among members of the royal family. In this, the Yoruba kingdoms were totally different from the kingdoms of their non-Yoruba neighbors. In these other kingdoms, a king was succeeded by his son directly after him, usually his first son. The Yoruba people rejected that, and evolved a system whereby all living princes of the realm were entitled to be king, and the people (through some chiefs), chose the king from the group of princes - a system that asserted that the people were the ultimate source of all authority.

Chiefs owed their positions to their being the leaders of the segments of the kingdom. Like the king, each chief was selected by members of his segment. In the original system, a king could not just vest a chieftaincy title in someone who was not leader of a

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

recognizable group. Each chieftaincy title belonged to a given group. When Asunsola gave titles to important new immigrants, he did it to honor the groups that they led and to assure those groups, on behalf of the chiefs and people of Owo, that they were welcome to stay and be part of Owo.

A king was sworn to conscientious observation of the checks and balances constructed to sustain this pluralism. Therefore, any king who tried to ignore them or attempted to establish personal power beyond the established limitations was deemed to have broken faith with his people and the gods of the land, and could be removed. And, therefore, each Yoruba kingdom established procedures for the orderly removal of a king.

Renrengenjen and the beginning of Benin's impact on Owo political system

Asunsola was succeeded by Renrengenjen, the ninth Olowo on the Ashara list. His reign started peacefully and with great pomp. The economy of the kingdom had been growing quite markedly since Asunsola's long reign (which is why the traditions record that Asunsola reigned in plenty and splendor). After the foundational conflicts and wars had subsided, the people had given most of their time to farming, and the natural fertility of Owo's land was showing in bountiful harvests. Very importantly, too, trade had been growing. As Owo emerged as a city of some size, the old routes traversing the Owo area had become busier. Soon, trade with Benin became the most important arm of Owo's trade. Trade on the old trade routes from across the Sahara, southwards beyond the Niger, through Oyo-Ile and Ife to Owo and Benin was, from the 13th century, beginning to grow rapidly. The new city of Owo became a significant entrepot where Yoruba and Edo traders met to trade. From Owo, too, goods moved on the forest east-to-west routes to the Ikale, Ondo and Ijebu countries.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

An important consequence of all this was closeness between Owo and the stronger kingdom of Benin to the south east. For the rulers of Owo, Ife was of course the home and source of cultural life, and Ife shone like the sun over most of the West African forest country. But, Benin was much nearer than Ife, and Benin too was coming along as a great center of culture. Especially, there was much that seemed attractive in the way Benin's kings ruled with great power and authority.[25]

The traditions indicate that towards the end of his fairly long reign, Renrengenjen began to play around with some of Benin's political ideas. For instance, he instituted the Igogo festival, a mammoth annual royal festival which featured the king in dazzling royal regalia on promenade through parts of the city. The problem with this festival at the beginning is that it was an exclusive royal creation having no root in the deities and spirits worshipped by Owo people, and designed to glorify the king before the masses without substantially taking account of the chiefs. Though the palace popularized a legend to link the Igogo festival to (the legend of a royal wife who miraculously vanished and whose spirit demanded to be appeased annually with a grand royal festival), the truth seems to be that Renrengenjen was really trying to imitate something that he admired in the ceremonial lives of the Benin kings.

It was traditional practice for a Yoruba king to choose a symbolic cognomen for himself. This king of Owo seems to have chosen for himself an Edo or Edo sounding

---

[25] Obayemi alludes to Benin's greatness at this time. '..the greatness of the city of Benin, the impressiveness of its rituals and the prestige and power of the Oba of Benin were in many respects more important in the precolonial era than military might or intervention in shaping , cementing or defining the relationship between the Oba and the neighboring states which surrounded the Benin kingdom.' For this, see Obayemi, Ade, 'The Yoruba and the Edo Speaking Peoples and their Neighbors Before 1600,' in J.F.Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, (eds.), History of West Africa (2nd ed.), London, 1976: 226.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

cognomen, Renrengenjen, as part of his agenda for surrounding himself with a Benin image or aura.

But Renrengenjen went further than all this. The traditions speak of him as embarking on some military adventures that were designed to create for him the image of a warrior king (like his Benin contemporaries). The fact that these adventures were unpopular seems obvious from the way they have been preserved in the traditions. It would seem obvious, from what is known of Owo at this point in its history, that the Owo kingdom was probably not yet strong enough for military adventures far from home. But his military adventures seem to have caused disruption in certain distant villages (some even as far away as the Akoko country). From these places, some refugees fled to Owo, where they formed separate little streets- probably refugee camps rather than streets. Taking advantage of their condition, the king chose favorites from among them for elevation to positions and so created new chiefs directly attached to him in order to bolster his freedom to act without the regular chiefs.

As Renrengenjen should have expected, the chiefs reacted. To outdo his Igogo festival, the Ighare chiefs, exploiting their hold on the state rituals, created an exclusive great shrine, using large pieces of uncut stones to 'Orisa Agbaiye,' the God of the whole earth, at the center of their quarter between Omushen and Arigidi squares. So while all the people would worship the *Ogun*, *Uja* or the *Osanyin*, the Iloro people saw themselves as the priests of *Orisa Agbaiye, God of the Universe*. It had its own set of worship reminiscent of the way the Hebrew people worship their God. The Iloro people performed circumcision on both their male and female children as all Yoruba people do. The altar for '*Orisa Agbaiye'* still stands at Iloro quarter. Any Iloro Chief or person

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

passing by the shrine had to lower his or her covering cloth in honor of the God of the Universe, *Orisa Agbaiye*. This may be an indication of the rudimentary knowledge of the God the Ife people are said to have had in their original home.[26]

All Yoruba people recognize an all high God (Olorun, Oluwa, Olodumare, Orisa Agbaiye, etc), but usually did not have a shrine to Him because they believed He was far too high for mortal man to approach, directly. So, they approached him through a large number of lesser gods (400 in all), each of whom ruled over some area of human life. Only in a few places in Yorubaland would one find a shrine to the all–high God; the Iloro quarter of Owo was one of such places.

Renrengenjen's reign, on the whole, marked a substantial beginning of major constitutional developments in Owo's history. Building upon tentative changes which had occurred in the one or two reigns preceding his, Renrengenjen moved the monarchy considerably towards a position of dominance in the Owo polity. The old dominant groupings were powerful and resilient, and so Renrengenjen tried to side track them by uplifting and empowering new groupings allied to the king. He also instituted new rituals (especially the Igogo festival) which presented to the Owo masses a highly glorified person of the Olowo annually, a highly glorified figure to whom the old dominant chiefs were made pointedly subordinate and subservient before the people. He was considerably successful, but he paid for his success with his life.[27] At his death, he left for his successors a monarchy poised for higher grounds.

---

[26] cf. the knowledge of God the Oduduwa descendants are said to have brought with them from their original home in Mecca or somewhere in the Middle East (Iraq) before their departure owing to religious persecution (the lost tribes of Israel?) alluded to in The History of the Yorubas by Samuel Johnson, CMS, Lagos, 1921. See also S. O. Biobaku, Lugard Lectures, 1957.

[27] It is said that Renrengenjen was assassinated by the chiefs. On the day he performed the worship ritual of Oronsen, the goddess of Igogo, after alighting on his dais the structure collapsed and he fell into a ditch

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

A period of interregnum followed the removal of Renrengenjen and it has been suggested by Ashara that probably this period saw the coming to power of Olowo Iyenmuwa or Iyenmuyiwa (a woman Olowo?) but effective power was in the hands of the Ighare chiefs. [28] As in all Yoruba kingdoms, when the king died, there was usually a period of mourning and an interregnum, presided over by one of the princesses, who would yield the throne to the new Olowo after the period of mourning, say, ninety days, was over. (Women were forbidden to become rulers in the Yoruba kingdoms). But following the death of Renrengenjen, Iyenmuwa, who was made the regent, refused to yield the throne to the next Olowo. She almost succeeded in usurping the throne as she refused to step aside when her period of interregnum ended. The Ighare chiefs eventually succeeded in removing Iyenmuwa. The legends say that the Ighare made her to disappear from the scene. Hence this Iyenmuwa episode has become synonymous with someone who disappeared without a trace. As a result of Iyenmuwa's actions, the practice of appointing a regent at the demise of the Olowo was stopped. Since her time, no woman has been allowed to act as regent in Owo.

After the interval, Asunsoma was crowned the new Olowo. This Olowo introduced chiefly paraphernalia. Asunsoma, the tenth Olowo, introduced the Olusherepe set of four large drums used first by the Olowo and later by his chiefs. Asunsoma is remembered by Owo traditions as effeminate.[29] He is said to have introduced the Olusherepe drum set into Owo but its use was then restricted to the Olowo alone. The drums were beaten for

---

already prepared beneath the platform, laced with dagger, split bamboo, cutlases, spears, hoes, and other sharp edged objects. He died of his wounds a few days later.

[28] Ashara, The History, 15

[29] This is a very intriguing depiction of Asunsuma. It has been speculated by Dr. Afolayan that it is possible that Iyenmuwa metamorphosed into Asunsuma to hide the fact that a woman actually ruled as Olowo at that point in Owo history. But we are not definitely sure of that.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the king on very important social occasions and danced to by the king alone. This was a form of state orchestra. The Olowo would put on his regalia and dance to the Olusherepe beats. These drums later became part of the chieftaincy accoutrements of the high chiefs.

In general, in Yoruba history, the development of the palace was a visible development of the power, influence and prestige of the monarchy. The palace tended to develop from just a home where the king and his family lived to an institution where the king reigned over his people. In the palace, therefore, wives and children (and signs of daily family life) became eliminated or hidden- so that ordinary daily things like child birth, death, burial, etc, became prohibited in the palace. Partly for this reason, when a king died, the high chiefs withheld the announcement until members of his family had had time to evacuate all personal belongings from the palace buildings. Seen in this perspective, Asunsoma's rule banning non-king burial in the palace is important. It was an act in the process of upgrading and uplifting the palace – one of the signs of a rising monarchy. Asunsoma is reported to have made a rule that prohibited the burial of any corpse (besides those of the Olowos) in the palace. This custom has been preserved up to the present.

Thus each of the early Olowos in the king list is remembered for his strength or weakness or for the innovations he brought about in the kingdom. Each Olowo participated in religious festivals and rituals throughout the year which were in honor of the gods, Orisa, to insure their continued benevolence and to safeguard the welfare of the town. In spite of the preponderance of Benin influence in court traditions, Owo religion is essentially Yoruba.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Owo town was still a very modest community when Ogeja became Olowo.[30] In an attempt to undermine the position of the Ighare chiefs or because he needed chiefs who would be loyal to the throne and help him with the administration of the kingdom, Ogeja moved his residence, the palace, from the Igbo-Ogwata site to Oke-Ekusi, a prominent hill then occupied by the Ighare chiefs. Ogeja made the Ighare chiefs move from there to a less commanding location near the settlement of the Idashen people. At the new site, Ogeja proceeded to build a prestigious palace facing the central market place, Ilede, in the center of town. Ogeja also moved the performance of the annual Igogo rites to the new palace grounds at Oke-Ekusi, while some of his attendants represented him at the shrine at Igbo-Ogwata during the worship service.

The Owo palace, occupied a large area of land,[31] and was strongly walled. [32] Ogeja built the Ehin-Ode courtyard, a public assembly hall and the Odo-uli (Odo-ile) courtyard where the Olowo took his meals and also the Ugha Ino-Uli, (Inu –Ile, the inner Courtyard), another courtyard where he kept his costume for the Igogo festival. He also built Ugha Akomaduse[33] and the Ugha Oke-Agbala for the royal children. Thus, Ogeja is credited with the construction of the first palace at its present site and it reflected the power and prestige of the Olowo.

---

[30] The whole place was made up of Igbo-Ogwata at Okiti Asegbo at the center. On the northern end was the Urogho area and on the southern side was the Iloro quarter. Not far from Oju Ogwa was the new settlement of Igboroko (Igbo= forest; Iroko= a type of hardy African tree) with only a few inhabitants. Isaipen people lived at Oke Ajana, (Ajana's hill) behind chief Sashere's compound.

[31] See Ojo, G. J. A., Yoruba Palaces, London, 1966, for dimensions and comparison with other Yoruba palaces.

[32] From Ogeja's time, every reigning Olowo added to the palace, which contains multiple courtyards or apartments called 'Ugha.' More than ninety percent of the land area remains a thick forest undeveloped even up to the present. The wives of the Olowo used part of the undeveloped area for gardening as they were forbidden to engage in large scale farming in the palace. It was a dense forest where many animals abounded.

[33] Akomaduse means the courtyard 'where you cannot deny being seen by someone who met you there.'

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

He constructed a road leading from Urogho Olisagho to Isuada and at Isuada; he made the Ologwa, a member of the royal family, the head chief, Asuada. [34] The Asuada was empowered to create his own chieftaincy titles but his chiefs were listed under the unrecognized chiefs at the Olowo's palace. Such chiefs could become a full-fledged chief when initiated by the Olowo and confirmed at the palace. Then such chiefs become recognized and could sit along with the other chiefs in the kingdom when he visited the palace.

One significant contribution of Ogeja to Owo's political system was the rule he enacted regarding the new chieftaincy titles that were coming into being at the time. This rule, roughly stated, stipulates that 'it is the Olowo's right and prerogative to create new titles and place such titles at any point on the hierarchical ladder of the administration of Owo kingdom.' Under this rule, he created a new title called Oshorun. [35] This was a major development in the Owo political system because it ushered in a gradual evolution of the Owo administrative chieftaincy system. The elevation of the Oshorun, a chief of later arrival, to the position of a high chief, with the same rank as the Ighare chiefs, was the continuation of a process in which newer chiefs, among them total strangers to Owo, would supersede those who had been at the helm of affairs from the beginning. As a result of this innovation, the Ighare chiefs would later lose their prime of place and political power but retained paramountcy over the performance of rituals.

During the reign of Olowo Ogeja, c1398-c1430AD, one Oneh Amurunmada was brought in chains to Owo as a war captive from his place at Utẹlu Ipaka, from where

[34] Isuada is made up of Urogho headed by the Asuada, Uromi headed by the Osokiya, Oderima headed by the Orima, Oderiya headed by the Oriya and Ugidi headed by the Odonrogho.
[35] Under this rule, Ogeja created the Edibo Olowo chieftaincy titles of Oshorun (which became the Uwangwe and later, Sashere), Oshuporu and Aribo probably in imitation of the Benin titles of 1yasere, Eribo, etc.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

some marauders had been kidnapping Owo people for the slave market or as sacrifice for their god, Ogun. Ashara says that following his capture, Oneh was condemned to death because of his leadership activities at Utelu. He was to be sacrificed to the Olowo's spirit double in heaven- ('fi ru orun Olowo') The sacrificial object, that is, *onugho,* (as the Owos would describe such a condemned criminal), Oneh, however, observed that the tying of the palm fronds used on him was wrongly done and so he offered to show the priests handling him how to do it right so that whatever sacrifice was offered to the Olowo's orun would be acceptable. Oneh was a former chief priest to the god, Ogun, in Utelu and so he was adept at tying the palm fronds. His method of tying the palm fronds so impressed his handlers that they brought him to the attention of the Owo authorities. The Olowo, after consulting with the Ighares, immediately ordered the release of Oneh so he could teach the priests how he tied the palm fronds ('re mariwo). Eventually, Oneh's death sentence was set aside and commuted to enslavement and he was appointed by the Olowo as a priestly assistant responsible for tying palm fronds to the neck of the 'onughos,' henceforth. In this position, he was conferred the chieftaincy title of Oshorun- 'the one who knows how to worship the Olowo's spirit double in heaven.'

The first Oshorun Oneh[36] later became renowned because of the quality of advice he gave to Ogeja. On one occasion, some of the chiefs and old men with whom Ogeja smoked 'koko gboro,' the long stem pipe, whenever they met at their weekly interval meetings- became disrespectful to Ogeja. Before that time, it was customary for the king to share the long-stem pipe used in smoking tobacco in the Afin with his chiefs. The

[36]The first Oshorun, Oneh, came from one of the neighboring settlements called Utelu-Ipaka, probably in the direction of the Edo kingdom or in the vicinity of the Akoko-Edo (Ivbosiakon) or nearby Utelu. He later became the Sashere, a title derived from Benin's Iyasere. Ashara, The History, Elerewe- Oral traditions, etc.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

chiefs usually smoked it in turns, with the Olowo participating. When Ogeja was insulted, he consulted his advisers and pages. The Oshorun advised the king to stop the habit of smoking pipes with his chiefs. In fact, he told the king that he should not have allowed tobacco smoking in the Afin. He then started to put into practice some policies and protocols that would raise the stature of the king above that of his chiefs. He built a raised platform for the king to use when receiving his subjects. He told the king never to rise up to welcome his subjects but for the subject to kneel down before him when greeting him.

Gradually, Ogeja started to put these measures into effect. On a set day, when the chiefs came to pay him homage, they were surprised to find that the Olowo was sitting on a dais, while the chiefs were standing around. Then the messengers started to urge the chiefs to kneel down to pay their respect. The idea of smoking tobacco in the palace became prohibited by law. This law, according to chief Ashara is known as 'Olakunmalasa.'

These measures did not go down easily, of course, but were met with resistance, especially by the Ighare chiefs. Ogeja's success was due to his own astuteness, aided by the leadership qualities of the men he appointed into positions of responsibility such as his Oshorun.[37] What Ogeja's career represents, no doubt, is the culmination of a long history of rivalry between the Olowos and the Ighare chiefs, a rivalry that had resulted in the elimination of Renrengenjen by the Ighare chiefs. The Ighare chiefs became so hostile to Ogeja that he always had to protect himself from them. He refrained from performing the Igogo ritual and parade while his residence was still at Igbo-Ogwata, knowing that

[37] Ogeja is said to have created the Oshuporu and the Aribo titles.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

that location made it easy for his opponents to reach and assassinate him as they had assassinated Renrengenjen. It was not until he had well established himself at the new palace at Oke-Ekusi that he resumed the annual Igogo parade, sending agents to represent him in the rituals at Igbo-Ogwata. In time, he moved the center of the Igogo ceremonies and rituals completely to the grounds of the new palace. On the whole, Ogeja seems to have been the most politically capable of the early Olowos.

Ogeja assumed the title Ogwa (Owa), a generic title for all kings in the eastern Yoruba country. Thus, Ogeja was the first Olowo to be called Ogwa or Owa. Ogeja styled his new chiefs Edibo Olowo, meaning 'chiefs of the Olowo.' In the second decade of the 15th century, Ogeja settled a people who came from Ikare but were originally from the Benin kingdom at Ipenmen and constructed a road from Isuada to the new settlement. Though Ipenmen was a small town, it became a very important part of the new Owo kingdom. Arimogija town, near Okeluse, a distance of twenty nine miles southeast of Owo, was named after Ogeja because he used to go there on hunting expeditions. The political tensions of Ogeja's reign continued into the next reign.

In about 1430 AD, Imagele became Olowo and after his installation as king, Imagele needed to use physical force to get himself into the new palace on Oke-Ekusi.[38] Apparently, while not opposing his installation as king, the Ighare chiefs tried to prevent him from the use of the new palace because it isolated the king from most of the town, elevated the king above all his chiefs, and provided excellent protection of the king. They failed in the attempt, and the palace on Oke-Ekusi remained the home of the Olowos, even though the turmoil continued for some time.

[38] Hence it became a practice for a new Olowo to enter the palace, on his way from Ushama, through a broken down portion of the palace walls. This was a temporary entrance that had to be closed permanently after the Olowo's entry into the palace. Adekambi, 'Owo in the 19th century,' 21.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

What was the nature of the political economy of Owo kingdom at this point? The next chapter will discuss the highlights of Owo's political economy and the basis of her later affluence.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Political Economy of Pre-colonial Owo Kingdom

Two factors dominated the pre-colonial history of Owo kingdom-first is its location at the extreme eastern frontier of the Yoruba country and second is her nearness to the Benin kingdom. These two factors have shaped the political, economic and social life of Owo people. It has also impacted the course of their development. Owo's location at the intersection of the various trade routes traversing the south central region of Nigeria encompassing such areas as the Nupe, Igbirra, the northeastern and south central Yoruba country and the Benin (Edo) culture area have contributed to the development of a trade nexus in which Owo had early found her niche. In the same vein, Owo's nearness to Benin had early exposed her to the vagaries of Benin power and encroachments but in retrospect, it had also strengthened Owo by making her to acquire the needed military and diplomatic skills, first to ward off Benin's hegemonic choke hold on her, and then enable her deal with Benin on equal terms.

Chapters 2-4 have established the background history of how Owo came into existence as a Yoruba kingdom in the southeastern forests of Yorubaland, including her early trade and political relations with other Yoruba kingdoms and the Benin kingdom. Chapter 4 presents the political structure that evolved, and a brief history of the principal political authorities or rulers (Olowos and chiefs) of the early kingdom. It was noted that written sources for this early period of the Owo kingdom (to the 16th century) are sketchy and meager, and for that reason, oral traditions are relied upon for many of the details.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The background information presented in Chapters 2-4, and this chapter, is important to the Research Question of this study. The history reveals the 'frontier' niche of the Owo people, and the 'character' of the Owo as a people from a variety of origins. It will be argued that agriculture, trade and commerce were integral to all the kingdoms in this geographicl area, but that art and political structures exhibited unique features in the case of the Owo kingdom. This shows the existence of a close relationship with the Benin kingdom. This chapter continues this background with a reconstruction of the political economy of Owo.

We reiterate again that the following reconstruction of the economic history of Owo kingdom from the 12th century relies heavily on oral traditions and comparisons with Owo's neighbors, and it is likely incomplete. We can begin, however, by sketching the outline of such economy based on what is known about the history of the political economy of Yorubaland from the early times. A look at the record of economic activities of the people in neighboring polities even as near to our times as the early 19th century will not be out of place. In what follows, therefore, I have extrapolated from works that have been done on other Yoruba settlements at their initial take off point. Basing the discussion on that, efforts have been made to highlight the salient features of the economic pursuits of the Yoruba people following their settlement in the forests of Yorubaland.[1]

By the 12th century, presumably the point of settlement of Owo kingdom, there were, at first, few practicing craftsmen who manufactured those goods needed by the dwellers of the new towns. There were diviners and blacksmiths who were perhaps the most

[1] It is assumed that with what we know of the economic pursuits of the Owo people in later centuries, an outline of the economic life of the people from the earliest period can be attempted. Akintoye, 'The Northeastern Yoruba Districts,' etc.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

needed group of specialists at the time because of the high demands for and the need to repair weapons of war and cutlass and hoes for farming. The main reason for the rudimentary nature of the political economy of Owo at the earliest period was the temporary character of the settlement. It was a site that was under constant attack from the earlier settlers and the fact that the Owo group had moved twice before settling at the last location was enough reason to indicate that they might have to move again. But the forest beyond the point of Owo's settlement to the further east was dense and forbidding; it appeared impenetrable. There was a small bridge over river Owan into the Edo country at a place now known as Agbanikaka but this was manned by the Benin soldiers and their watchmen at that point. And so they decided to make the present site their permanent home, the dangers attendant upon that decision notwithstanding.

In the forests of West Africa (as of most of Africa, in fact), the practice was that people cleared the land for their farm and lived on it, making farms around their dwelling from generation to generation. Hence, among most West African peoples, settlement tended to be dispersed, as people lived where they farmed. A very good example is the Igbo- as well as most of the peoples of south –eastern Nigeria. The result was small-dispersed settlements and the rise of village democracies. Yoruba settlements developed differently. The Yoruba pattern was one in which the people settled together in a clearing and treated the land around that clearing as farmland.

In this way, the Yoruba developed a peasant–based urbanism in which the people went out of town in the morning to go and work on their farms and returned to town in the late afternoon. As a result of this, a peculiar pattern of land ownership developed. Each lineage (being the families related in blood, usually the descendants of a known

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ancestor), owned the land on which its lineage compound was built in the town, and a piece of farmland outside the town.[2] Ownership of the land belonged to the lineage, not the individual; the individual member had the right to farm on any part of the lineage farmland that had not been claimed for use by another member. No individual member could alienate any part of the lineage farmland by selling or giving it to a non-member. If a non–member wanted to farm for some time on a lineage farmland, he had to seek the permission of the lineage and, at the discretion of the lineage head, O*lori ebi*, pay some toll or *ishakole.*

Inside the town, the Yoruba developed a peculiar architecture featuring large lineage homes in which many families, all members of a lineage, lived. Each such lineage home, better referred to as lineage compound or *Agbo ile,* was one single sprawling building in which family living apartments were arranged around open courtyards. Each nuclear family lived in one apartment. All the children were raised as offspring of the whole lineage. Each citizen of a town bore the distinctive identity of membership of his lineage, and the positions he could hold in the town were determined by the entitlements of his lineage.[3] It was in the context of this peculiar urban culture that facial marks developed -- each lineage creating its own distinctive facial marks. The lineage was strongly defensive of its name and honor, and therefore was very sensitive about the conduct of its members.

Thus, the lineage had a corporate existence of its own, featuring lineage meetings, a lineage head, i.e. the *Olori ebi*, and intricate rules of inter-family and interpersonal contact. The lineage head was usually the oldest living male member of the lineage. Funerals, weddings, and other rites of passage in the lineage, were corporate lineage

[2] Lloyd, P. C., Yoruba Land Law, London, 1962: 117ff.
[3] Lloyd, P. C., 'The Yoruba Lineage,' Africa, 25, 1955: 235-51

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

events. If the history of the town had vested a lineage with a chieftaincy title, then that title was hereditary in that lineage. When the titleholder died and another had to be appointed, the lineage did the appointing from any of its members and handed him to the government of the town (i.e. the king and his council of chiefs) for the investiture.

As the majority of the people were farmers, they started to cultivate farms, growing farm produce such as yams, maize, and beans for local consumption. The industries of the settlers included mat making, cloth weaving, pottery, carving and woodwork, and the making of iron tools and artifacts.

Trade, a very important economic undertaking by the Owo people, had started between them and the Benin people from at least the 13th century. This early trade contact fostered the beginnings of what would become significant interaction with the Benin people. Owo traditions suggest that Owo started to copy some of the Edo customs as a result of the interactions.

The success and prosperity of all this urban culture depended on the success of agriculture. A town which experienced frequent famine was sure to decline in population or even break up, as lineages migrated to other places. A town with a dependably prosperous agriculture tended to grow and grow. Continual growth in the population and size of their town was a perpetual concern of the rulers of a town. Kings regularly consulted oracles and made sacrifices in order to seek the favor of the gods towards the farms and towards attracting new immigrants.

In the context of this strong, peasant–based urban culture, various types of manufacturing, various types of art, and trade (local and long distance trade) developed. The geographical location and the reaction of a people to its natural environment

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

determined the course of the socio-economic life of the people. In the case of the growing Owo kingdom, agriculture, largely peasant farming took the bulk of the energy of the people from the earliest times. Owo is located in a well-watered environment, with the Osse and the Ogbesse rivers, near the eastern and western boundaries and their tributaries, forming the main source of water for the area. In addition, annual rainfall measured in double digits of inches moistens the soil for planting crops. With heavy rainfall between the months of April and October, the savannah to the north, yielded abundant palm products.

It appears that adequate vegetation and other climatic factors, conducive to human development, made the early Owo kingdom economically viable, as she was endowed with abundant natural resources and these tended to attract people from far and near to come to settle in Owo. With human capital, the practice of agriculture and farming became an easy enterprise. To the south was the thickly wooded rain forest in which mahogany, iroko and opepe, trees of high quality for arts and crafts and other industries abounded.

The location of Owo and the relief of the area all added to the development and growth of trade and other commercial activities. The Osse and Ogbesse rivers unite south of Okeluse – the southernmost limit of Owo influence-and from that point, the Osse retains its name until it flows into the Ughoton creek, some fifty miles south and southeast, in the Benin kingdom. The river Osse was navigable for all sizes of canoes during the wet season from Okeluse as far as the Ukaro-Uzzeba ford, but during the dry season only light canoes could make the journey. North of Ukaro, the riverbed was very rocky and not navigable at anytime. It is of particular interest to us here that that part of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Osse, which lay to the south of its junction with Ogbesse, was navigable throughout the year for all sizes of canoes. This formed a trade route to Koko, (the Benin port), in the Sapele and Warri areas in the Benin country.

It appears that the locality of Owo kingdom was one in which large-scale farming was profitable as Owo was connected to the outside world both by water and by land. By the 16th century and after, farming was practiced on individual lineage basis. To meet the labor demand required to cultivate and maintain the extensive farms, various devises were employed. The most famous devise was the *Owe* or *Ebeshe*, which was used to clear the bush and work a new farmland. A man would organize an Owe or Ebeshe, which has been described as '.... a larger group of agnatic kin and affines who work for a day or two in return for food and palm wine. ' [4] The core of the members of an Owe or Ebeshe work group was usually but not always, the kin of the organizer. Friends, neighbors or age –group members often took part in these ventures. Sometimes, an Owe group might involve as many as thirty able –bodied men. The discharge of labor might be but was not strictly rotational. Entertainment in the form of food, (Iyan, pounded yam), palm wine and kola nuts were given as a form of immediate reward rather than cash payment.

Another devise used in raising the needed labor in the farms was the *Aro.* This is a rotational method of labor sharing among male descendants from the same father or an extended family. Aro was also practiced among members of an age group or on the basis of a mixture of blood relations and one's age –group. An Aro group was, of course, smaller than an Owe work group as the supply of labor was strictly on rotational basis. As in the case of the Owe, food, drinks and entertainment were provided but the

[4] Ojo, Yoruba Culture, 17.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

discharge of labor was reciprocal. The large farms created with the Owe were maintained by means of the Aro, and smaller farms could also be created by this method.

Prominent among the crops cultivated were yams, cassava, maize and beans, which formed the staple diet of the community. Every freeborn male, whatever his major vocation, usually possessed a small farm of his own. The male, in addition to farming, tapped palm wine and cut palm nuts. From these were produced the palm products – especially the oil-which, apart from being locally consumed, also formed an important item of exports to the port of Koko, Ilorin and Bida, especially in the later period, say, the 17th century. By the later half of the 17th century, cotton had become a farm product of immense value. Weaving, which was a dominant domestic industry, was kept going by the regular supply of cotton from the farms. Materials for the blue and black indigo of excellent quality were easily obtained from the forest nearby.

From the early part of the 18th century, it has become a practice for daughters and slaves (for those who have any), to assist women to gin, card and spin cotton. In this predominantly women industry, cooperative or group methods parallel to the Aro system of farming among men also developed among the women, by which steady and adequate supply of thread for dyeing and weaving was ensured. This was realized by a system in which all the women in an extended family contributed a definite length of yarn every market day or at other regular time intervals. One member collected the yarn so subscribed at certain intervals in rotation. By this method, the looms were kept humming all year round.

It is important to stress that vertical with dug out pit, *Ukoro*, rather than horizontal weaving, was the only system of weaving practiced in Owo. Prominent among the cloths

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

produced was the *'Olorofun,'* a white and black stripped broad cloth which was locally used by all for leisure and informal dresses. The *'Alaisa'* and the 'Olorimejin' [5] were especially made to withstand rough use in the farm. Then, there was the *'Iketa Dudu,'* blue /black and beautiful, which only the titled men could afford to purchase and use within Owo, as a mark of affluence, because of its prohibitive cost. The three yards of *'Iketa Dudu'*, [6]is equivalent to about six yards of the modern measure. The *'Elegheghe'* was the local cloth of the highest quality and was usually presented as gifts to august visitors. Traders from the Benin port of Koko bought this cloth and sold it to the Europeans who took them to the overseas market.

Hunting and trapping animals in the thick forests in Owo by men had started from the 13th century. But by the end of the seventeenth century, some Owo men had so mastered the use of the Dutch and Danish guns that they started using them to kill big game animals such as the lion, tiger, elephant and the buffalo. The availability of guns brought an outstanding change in the traditional method of animal hunting among the Owo people. It is believed that guns started to become available in appreciable quantities by the early decades of the seventeenth century. Prior to that date, Portuguese muskets and Danish guns had only filtered into Owo through the Benin kingdom. With the availability of guns, it was possible to kill such big games as the buffalo, the tiger and the elephant with ease and within hours instead of the laborious method of using poisoned arrows. This factor explains the ease with which Owo hunters were able to satisfy the seemingly endless demand for elephant tusks by Benin traders.

---

[5] Similar to what the Oyo –Yoruba call 'Gberioko,' meaning: 'mainstay in the farm.'
[6] This was also known as *'Ipan meta'* in Owo.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

It is said in the sources that Owo people were very dexterous in handling guns and there were blacksmiths who were very skilled in repairing and even fabricating flintlock guns in imitation of the imported ones. Other metal tools like hoes, cutlasses, spears and knives were forged at Owo to meet the demands of the community.

There were many workshops noted for wood sculpture, ivory carving and brass casting in Owo. Recent scholarship seems to indicate that Owo has always been an important center for the production of sculptures and works of art done in wood and ivory and it seems that this tradition goes back to the 18th century or earlier. Sculptors obtained their wood from the forest surrounding Owo, ivory carvers patronized the elephant hunters for the tusks of their game and brass casters obtained their raw materials from traders who come from the 'north.' [7]

Making of high-class decorative pottery was another craft which was practiced extensively by the Owo people but whose origins date back to the sixteenth century. Local pottery centers, managed by women, abounded to meet local demand and occasional export. It appears highly probable that Owo brought the knowledge of her cultures from Ile-Ife. Apart from the similarity between works produced from the Owo and Ife, two centers with a tradition of artistic excellence in Yorubaland, potsherd pavements- very similar to those found among the artifacts of Ile-Ife- have recently been uncovered by accident at Okiti-Asegbo and Okedogbon area (Egbenren street).[8]

---

[7]According to chief D. O. Akeredolu, former Director of Antiquities, Lagos, Nigeria, 1984, Chief Inonren Ogunmola Olujare with members of his family at Iloro Quarter (Chief Odofogho's compound) was the most prolific wood sculptor while the Ologan and Ogunleye Oladokun families are remembered for their talent and dexterity at brass casting and gunsmithing.

[8] Eyo, Ekpo, 'Excavations in Owo and Ife and their implications for Ife, Owo and Benin Studies,' PhD Thesis, University of Ibadan, 1976:302.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In addition, there was a fairly large trading community consisting of both indigenes and aliens in Owo. Through the activities of these traders, and because of the nearness of Akure to Owo, it appears that Owo became linked by trade with Akure, and through that , with Ondo, Ilesha, Ado-Ekiti and Benin and places as far a field as Lagos (Eko), Lokoja, Bida, Ogbomosho and Ilorin which also featured in the trading markets and networks. Important items of trade carried from Owo to Benin were cloths, ivory, and palm oil, grinding stones, apon, locust beans, plantain and slaves. Ilorin, Bida and Lokoja also bought all these items but were especially fond of 'osun,' cam wood, which Owo had in abundance. Items of imports that came in through the 'port' of Okeluse were guns, gunpowder and coral beads. From Epe, in the Ijebu waterside, was brought smoked fish, from Ilorin, Bida and Lokoja came 'tiro,' black eye-lashes, shea butter, Moroccan leather works and 'agra,' red beads. Convoys of traders moved between these places and Owo, with the traders carrying their wares on their heads.

There were two systems of markets in Owo. The four –day week morning market at the *Ilede* or *Oja-Oba,* the king's market and the 5th day morning market at the *Owa Agbe* or *Oja–Koko*. The last named market started as a stopping venue for displaying pots by people from Upenmen who were specialists in the making of clay pots. This site, the verandah of chief Agbe's house, became a market in the 18th century for political and cultural reasons. Then the alternate day evening market, 'oja ale.' Later in the 18th century, the *oja-Ojomo*, (Ojomo's market) came into being. It also has two sessions, morning and evening. In these markets, traders bought and sold goods, using the cowry currency as the medium of exchange. It is important to stress, however, that the trading class formed only a very small, though socially important, proportion of the community.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The majority of the people remained inextricably attached to their farms and life was governed by the customs of the community –even in the urban town of Owo. Communications between Benin and the Yoruba mainland can be traced to the 13th or 14th centuries and as a result of the location of Owo in the periphery of Yorubaland these communications necessarily passed through her territory.

The result of the above was the development of a fusion of the Edo and Yoruba cultural achievement. This fusion or the Owo culture, far from being a mere reflection of Benin and Ife shows as a force equal in importance in West African art history, which has attained an eminent position of inventiveness and creativity far surpassing the other two. A study of Owo art reveals that it existed in different media, techniques and styles. The artifacts that have recently been discovered at Owo reveal ones that outstrip (except in sheer volume) those of Benin, some of whose art forms derived from Owo. Compared to Ife also, Owo art forms appear similar but in some cases there have been discovered some aesthetic depictions in the arts that make Owo appear superior in some areas. Ife art forms are in bronzes and terra cottas and also in shaping of twenty-foot high granite monoliths, the carving of shrine furniture from intractable quartz by methods which seem to owe something to lost-wax casting, (*cire purdue*), the paving of considerable parts of the town with potsherds laid on edge, and the making of glass beads on an industrial scale in pre-European times. Only the first of these phenomena has much to do with art. Owo did not emulate these extremes, although the Ife style terra cotta was practiced there in a very slightly less naturalistic variant (and perhaps a century or two later than at Ife), but practiced in an astonishing range of different styles in bronze, wood, and ivory, which argues a far greater artistic freedom than existed at either Ife or Benin. This freedom of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

expression may be one reason why Owo art has failed to attract the attention of the art world until quite recently.[9] Willett says that Owo ivory art is a striking example of how it is possible for such a place to escape notice. Some hundreds of ivories since known to be of Owo origin were, in 1950, in the western world (some probably having been there for two or three centuries) but not identified as from Owo, most (since 1897) being treated as Benin work, the rest generally as Yoruba work [10]

Many authors postulate the artistic evidence connecting Ile-Ife with Benin. The traditions hold that an Ife craftsman who had been sent at the request of the Oba of Benin brought the technique of brass casting in Ife to Benin. Recent authors have analyzed the stylistic evidence found in the Ife and Benin corpus of art and concluded that the link is irrefutably established. Willett argues this case unequivocally in his book [11] as well as Elisofon[12] Forman[13] and Maquet.[14]

Recent archaeological excavations in Owo[15] reveal art styles, which have stylistic affinity or resemblance with both Ife and Benin. Ife art survived in Owo until, at least, the 15th century during which time 'classical' Benin art was just beginning. The Owo art thus fills the stylistic gap between the end of Ife's 'classical' period (c1160) and the earliest Benin heads, which Fagg gives as about 1500AD.[16]

---

[9] Fagg, William, Yoruba Sculpture of West Africa, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1982:46-7
[10] Ibid and ff.
[11] Willett, Frank, Ife in the History of West African Sculpture, 1967:153-165
[12] Elisofon, Elliot and William Fagg, Sculpture of West Africa, New York, Praeger, 1958:60-66
[13] Forman, Wemer, et. al., Benin Art, London: P. Hamlyn, 1960:16-25
[14] Maquet, Jacques J., African: Les Civilizations Noires, Paris: Harizans de France, 1962: 174-182
[15] Eyo, Ekpo O., 'New Treasures from Nigeria,' Expeditions, 14, (2) Winter, 1972: 2-11
[16] Sieber, Roy, and Arnold Rubin, Sculpture of Black Africa: The Paul Tishman Collection, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1968

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

This chapter has described the political economy of pre-colonial Owo, and the evidence of trade and interaction with other Yoruba kingdoms as well as Benin. The artistic evidence, in particular, suggests early contact and trade with the Benin kingdom.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER SIX

Owo kingdom and Benin Expansion

A strong body of Ife traditions has it that Ojugbelu, the founding father of the Owo kingdom, was a junior brother of Oranmiyan, the founder of Benin's Eweka royal family.[1] Both are said to have been sons of Oduduwa, the founder of the Ife kingdom in central Yorubaland, and to have migrated from Ife about the same time. Owo and Benin traditions generally support these details. Moreover, Jacob Egharevba's chronology of Benin history and Ashara's chronology of Owo history put the founding of the Owo kingdom and the founding of the ruling Eweka dynasty of Benin in about the 12th or the 13th century. [2]

Egharevba, recording in the 1920s, well preserved traditions of the Benin palace, has it that the Benin kingdom had existed for centuries before the coming of Oranmiyan in the 12th or 13th century.[3] According to these traditions, leaders of the Benin kingdom, experiencing severe instability under their Ogiso kings, sent to request Oduduwa to send a prince to help stabilize their kingdom. The prince, Oranmiyan, whom Oduduwa sent from Ife, encountered some resistance from some sections of the Benin leadership and needed to use some force to take possession of the throne and re-establish order. When Oranmiyan decided to return home many years later, he installed his son, Eweka, born of a Benin woman as king, and so was born the Eweka dynasty which has continued to rule the Benin kingdom till our times. [4]

---

[1] Ashara, The History, 20
[2] Ashara, The History, 10; Egharevba, A Short History , 13
[3] Egharevba, Short History, 10
[4] Ibid; Akinola, G.A., 'The Origin of the Eweka Dynasty of Benin: A Study in the Use and Abuse of Oral Traditions,' JHSN, # 8, 1976: 21-35.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

It is not entirely clear how to interpret these traditions, which seem to establish some form of relationship between Ojugbelu and Oranmiyan. Though some Ife traditions claim that the two were sons of the same woman named More,[5] other traditions seem to suggest that Oranmiyan was a warrior and Ojugbelu was a young commander in Oranmiyan's following. The details of Ojugbelu's migration to Owo, however, clearly do not indicate any linkage with Oranmiyan's own march through more or less the same forests to Benin. All that seems certain, then, is that Ojugbelu and Oranmiyan were contemporaries and that they belonged to the same early era in Ife's history about the 11th to the 15th century when Ife princes and other personages created the tradition of going out to found or conquer kingdoms in parts of the forests of southwestern Nigeria.

Obayemi points out that the connecting strand in the history of this culture area (including the Edo country) seems to be that mini-state structures abounded in the forests, and that later immigrant groups then came in successive waves bringing mega state ideas and structures with them, sometime between the 12th and the 16th centuries.[6] Ryder accepts this, but suggests that the type of similarities in the political institutions of Owo and Benin, for example, would seem to indicate that both originated not in Ife but in some other place, perhaps, on the Niger–Benue confluence. In short, Ryder sees the institution of the Oba and the cultural similarities between Owo and Benin as a function

[5] Dr. Omotosho Eluyemi, the Apena of Ile- Ife, (Institute of African Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife), says that Ojugbelu was a younger brother of the Oba of Benin and both left Ile-Ife at the same time. Their father was Oduduwa and their mother was known as More (Owo and Benin ancestral shrines are very close to each other at Ife. Chief Priest of Owo Deity, Olopo-Ore, is chief Obaloran who is third in rank to the Oni of Ife). Dr. Eluyemi, personal communication, Ife, 1985.

[6] Obayemi, Ade, 'The Yoruba- and Edo- speaking peoples and their Neighbors before 1600,' in J.F.Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, (eds.), History of West Africa, vol. 1, (2nd edn.) London, 1976: 136- 207.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of origins rather than of the later, prolonged contacts and relationships.[7] The general thrust of Owo traditions appears not to support Ryder's suggestion.

Concerning this matter of origins, there is yet a certain tendency in the traditions that deserves to be examined. Like the Olowo, a few other major kingdoms of eastern Yoruba country have it in their traditions that they are brothers of Oranmiyan. The traditions of the Ado kingdom in Ekiti claim that the Ewi of Ado-Ekiti was a younger brother of Oranmiyan, that he accompanied Oranmiyan into Benin, and that he later left Benin and migrated northwestwards to the present site of Ado where he suppressed a small settlement of people, the Ilesun and established his kingdom.[8] That the Ewi Awamaro, like rulers of other similar kingdoms, is not of Edo extraction is made clear by the course of their history. Is it possible then that these kings are descendants of leaders of large immigrant groups (Obayemi's immigrant waves) who attempted to establish themselves in the Benin country, failed, and retraced their steps to their present locations?

The arrival of the large group of immigrants, led by Imade, began immediately to transform the area that was destined to become the heartland of the Owo kingdom. Each of the many earlier smaller settlements in the area had cleared only little bits of the surrounding forest to make small farm patches. The Imade group began immediately to push the forest back in order to open up land for their farming activities. The conflicts which developed between the immigrant community and the older settlements slowly resolved itself in victory for the immigrants and the suppression and assimilation of the earlier settlers. Continual arrivals of additional immigrants aided the growth, expansion

---

[7] Ryder, A.F.C., 'A Reconsideration of the Ife-Benin Relationship,' JAH, No. V1, No. 1, 1965: 25-37.
[8] Oguntuyi, A.O., A Short History of Ado-Ekiti, Akure, 1957; Akintoye, S. A., 'The Northeastern Yoruba Districts and the Benin kingdom,' JHSN, Vol. 4, #4, 1969: 539-53

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and amalgamation of the area by the settlers. Gradually and surely, a sizeable urban community emerged.

The expansion of trade was one of the most powerful results of all this change. A central market place, Ilede, already in existence, became a vibrant center of trade. Traders, almost all of them women, began to tap neighboring towns and villages for produce and other commodities for the market day. In time, they went further and further a field to sell and to procure. Benin was the largest single town in this whole deep-forest country, and she was already considerably famous. Goods and traders from Benin began to appear increasingly in the Owo market, and so too did goods and traders from Owo in the Benin market. As a result of the trade connections with Benin, Owo became a very important center for trade. According to Owo and Benin traditions, the time came when most of Owo's external trade was done with Benin and many Edo traders lived in Owo. Thus trade contact between Owo and Benin started very early.

Trade to the northeastern Yoruba country was a very important branch of Benin's trade in the period from the fifteenth century and onwards. Each branch of Benin's trade with the hinterland was organized under one of the trading associations called *Ekhen*, each of which had the Oba of Benin himself as patron and had a president or *Odionwere*, one of the leading palace chiefs. The best known of these associations was the *Ekhen-Egbo*, the association of traders to Owo and beyond.[9]

In the earliest periods, before the arrival of the Portuguese in Benin in c1485, the goods traded in these parts were in local stuffs such as salt, coral beads, brass utensils, and iron implements sold by the Benin. The Binis are said to have been skilled blacksmiths. From the 16th century, when European goods entered the Benin

[9] Akintoye, 'The Northeastern Yoruba Districts,' 535.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

commodities trade, the Europeans brought tobacco, chains and necklaces and later, guns and gunpowder.[10] The bulk of these goods were redistributed and taken through the trade routes for the markets of eastern Yorubaland and beyond. A small part of these goods were transported by head to different parts of eastern Yorubaland particularly Owo. Through trade, most of the goods that later became household staples found their way into society. The eastern Yoruba, in exchange, brought their own goods to the market. These included homemade cloths, leather goods, ivory (elephant teeth or tusks), 'apon' (oro nuts), palm oil and kernels, Ilorin beads, and delicacies such as locust beans and dyes. Some of the goods that were bought by the Benin traders ended up being exported by the Europeans from the 15th century onwards.[11]

According to Jean Barbot, there were two types of native cloth bought by the Benin.[12] The first type, called Benin cloth, was made up of '*four bands, striped blue and white, an ell and a small half long...and called by the Blacks Mouponoqua.*' The second type, the blue narrow cloth, Ambafis was '*much inferior to the former in every way.*' The latter were the three strip cloth which the Dutch traders described as having only '*three strips sewn together.*' Barbot adds that both sorts were made in the inland country. Some have attributed the source of these cloths to far away places such as the Nupe country on the Niger and Ijebu. The Ekiti, Akoko and Igbomina countries have also been mentioned as probable origins of these clothes. But Owo, the nearest neighbor of Benin where spinning, dyeing and weaving of cotton cloth were perhaps the most important industry

[10] Ryder, A. F. C., Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897, London, 1969.
[10] Akintoye, 'The Northeastern Yoruba Districts, ' 536
[11] ibid.
[12] Barbot, Jean, A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea, London, 1732: 67

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of the women, did not appear on the list.[13] Most of the period under study, Owo weavers made clothes called 'Atipan, ' 'Olori mejin,'and 'iketa,' clothes for home consumption but very expensive weaves such as 'Seghosen,' 'Elegheghe,' (white and red) and others called 'Olorofun,' (white), meant for export.[14] These clothes were sold by the European traders in exchange for gold in Gabon, the Gold Coast and Angola. The Europeans also bought slaves from the Benin traders. These slaves were mostly products of Benin invasions of eastern Yorubaland.

Thus, the earliest contacts of the Ekiti, Ijesha, and Akoko and Owo countries with Benin were commercial. It is generally believed that these earliest contacts dated back to the fifteenth century.[15] Benin traders brought corals, European cloth, cowries shells and European iron implements and, at a later date, guns and gunpowder, and took away home-spun cloth and cam wood as well as beads and potash imported from the 'north' through Ekiti and Akoko. Akure was the far inland entrepot of this Benin trade and as a consequence of this, a considerable number of Edo people soon settled permanently at Akure.[16]

From about the middle of the fifteenth century and through the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, the Benin Empire underwent a great deal of expansion.[17] The period of the greatest expansion was in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, the time of the great warrior kings: Ewuare, Ozolua, Ezigie, Orogbura and Ehengbuda.[18] Eastern Yoruba traditions usually attribute the success of the Benin wars of expansion to firearms

---

[13] ibid.
[14] Poynor, R., 'Traditional Textiles in Owo, Nigeria', AA 14, 1, 1980: 47-5, 88.
[15] Akintoye: 'The North-Eastern Yoruba Districts,' 544-6
[16] NAI: Ben. Dist. 3/1/1, Akures to Political Officer (Capt. E. P. S. Roupel) of Benin, 26 April 1897, Benin Political Papers, 1897.
[17] Bradbury, R.E., The Benin Kingdom and the Edo Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria, International African Institute, 1957:19-22.
[18] Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

introduced by Europeans. Although Egharevba says that guns and gun powder were brought to Benin city by the earliest Portuguese visitors, the early Portuguese traders did not sell firearms to Benin, at least, not in large quantities, and it was not until about the end of the seventeenth century, when the great tide of Benin expansion had ebbed, that the Dutch began to sell some flint –locks on the Benin River.[19]

Although the Benin armies did not enter the Akoko and Ekiti countries until the late fifteenth century during the reign of Ewuare, [20] the first Benin invasion of Owo occurred much earlier, in the early part of the fifteenth century. [21] The first Benin invasion of Owo occurred sometime in the first half of the 15th century, in the early part of the reign of Oba Ewuare of Benin and the Olowo Imagele. Egharevba, recording Benin's traditions, dates it to 1444AD, while Ashara, recording Owo's traditions, puts it at 1430AD. Egharevba says that the Oba of Benin ordered this invasion of Owo because the Owo had rebelled against Benin, thus implying that the Owo kingdom was already subject to the authority of Benin before this invasion. Egharevba does not, however, record any such prior authority of Benin over Owo. On the contrary, Owo traditions recorded by Ashara, emphatically denies such prior Benin authority before this invasion. It would seem, therefore, that the reason given by Owo traditions for this invasion is more plausible and reliable, namely that the Benin attack was part of a growing aggression of the Benin kingdom against its neighbors in the period starting with Ewuare's reign.

The timing of the invasion, and the choice of the men employed in it by the Benin authorities, seems to have been determined by the exigencies of the internal politics of

---

[19] Ryder, A. F. C., 'Dutch trade on the Nigerian Coast during the 17th century,' JHSN, vol. 3, No. 2, 1965: 208; Akintoye, Revolution and Power Politics, 26.
[20] Bradbury, 'Chronological problems in the Study of Benin History,' JHSN, vol. 1, No. 4, 1959: 263-87.
[21] Egharevba, A Short History, 1960: 14; Ashara, The History, 1952: 14; Chief Elerewe's Notes.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Benin. According to Egharevba, there was a particularly powerful and rich chief at Uselu, named Iken, who opposed and imitated the Oba (of Benin) in every way possible. Unable to curb this over mighty subject, Ewuare diplomatically made friends with him, and then sent him out on a very challenging mission-to attack the neighboring kingdom of Owo beyond the great forests. It is not known whether the Oba merely wanted to send Iken far away from home, or whether he expected him to perish on this mission.

The accounts of the invasions, as preserved in Benin and Owo traditions, differ. According to Benin traditions, the Benin army under Iken overcame Owo's resistance in a short, sharp encounter, and occupied Owo. Then, having taken a lot of booty and captives, Iken ordered his army to start to return to Benin, himself staying behind to supervise the return. After most of Iken's army had left, the Owo people counter-attacked. Iken fought bravely, but his position was overrun and he himself died fighting. His army returned home as a defeated army, and the whole of Benin mourned him.[22] The Owo traditions, on the other hand, present a simple, straight account of victory. According to them, the Benin army came under its dreaded commander, Iken, but the Owo people confronted them and in a short fierce battle, the Benin army was routed and its commander was killed.

The two accounts are, however, not difficult to reconcile. It seems probable that the Owo traditions have focused on the ultimate victory of the Owo people and weeded out, over time, any memory of Iken's initial successes. As an event in Owo's history, the importance of this invasion is that Owo defended itself successfully against the first invasion by Benin.

---

[22] Egharevba, A Short History, 15

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Although the Benin army attempted to conquer the Owo kingdom and subjugate the kingdom to the political authority of the Benin kingdom, Owo was able to stand her ground and retain her independence. But that did not change the economic and social relationship between the two kingdoms. Because Owo was not conquered, she did not have to enter into any agreement or treaty with the Benin authorities. In fact, that period witnessed the beginnings of a very close cultural and economic relationship between Owo and Benin.

The impact of this war on the internal political structure of Owo can be seen in the beginning of the change of the title of Oshorun to Uwangwe, as he was one of the ablest lieutenants of Imagele in the Benin war. Because Imagele, though a young man, was able to beat back the strongest military power in southern Nigeria at that point, he became very popular among the people of Owo and his position became strengthened within the kingdom. He acquired an aura of invincibility and thereafter attempted a centralization of the kingdom. He had asked the help of the outlying districts both during the war and after and the people in the Owo dependencies rallied around their king and gave him the moral and material support needed to prosecute the war. The leaders of the surrounding villages and townships actually fought on the side of Owo, with some of them sustaining casualties.[23]

The Benin kingdom had been plagued with internal problems during the brief reign of Ezoti, and under his successor, Olua, Benin did not fare any better as she appeared to have become weakened by internal political problems and wars with Idah. But, according to Egharevba, upon coming to the Benin throne and intent on redeeming the earlier loss

[23] A good example of this was the Owa- Ale Orukushuku, the ruler of Ikare, who joined forces with the Owo and made sure that the Benin forces did not use Ikare to enter Owo during the war.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

suffered by Benin at the hands of the Owo defense forces, Ozolua quickly marched against Owo. Thus the second Benin invasion of Owo occurred shortly after Ozolua came to the throne of Benin after about fifty years of close interaction between Benin and Owo. Egharevba says that Owo surrendered to the invading Benin forces without a fight. Because of that Ozolua spared the town saying that the people were very humble indeed, according to the name of their town, Owo or Ogho, which means 'honor' or 'respect.'[24] However, Owo traditions do not mention this Ozolua conquest. Egharevba says that this war occurred in c1481AD. No reason is given for this second Benin invasion of Owo kingdom and no fighting is reported. We can imagine that the invasion was a sudden event and it caught the Owo authorities by surprise.

Oral traditions do not mention this conquest by Ozolua. Egharevba says that it occurred in c1481, some fifty years after the first Benin invasion of Owo. It is well known, however, that when Ozolua came to the throne, he embarked upon a series of military campaigns aimed at restoring the king's authority over the outlying provinces of the Benin kingdom which had rebelled during the years of the kingdom's weakness. It is not improbable that one of the small armies engaged in these campaigns inside the Benin territories made a sudden inconsequential incursion into parts of the Owo kingdom and encountered no opposition there, since the Owo authorities were not expecting any invasion. This might explain the fact that the Benin traditions record an invasion of Owo at this point while Owo traditions do not.

[24] Egharevba, A Short history, 15. Egharevba says that Ozolua imposed his sons on the conquered towns and villages, such as Idogbo, Udo, and Eyen. He says that Ozolua was the father of Alani of Idoani, Olopke of Okpe in Afenmai Division, Owa of Owo, Awujale of Ijebu-Ode, Eze of Aboh and Uguan of Ora. This claim appears far fetched.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Later, beginning from the last years of Ozolua's reign in Benin, Benin forces came in a series of invasions of Owo. The details of these are unclear. All that is known is that the pressure became so intense that the Owo authorities, though their kingdom was not conquered, thought it wise to enter into some sort of accommodation with Benin in order to buy peace. The agreement entered into amounts to a considerable diminution of Owo's independence. Owo agreed to pay some tributes in the form of ivory (elephant tusks), palm oil, grinding stones, kola nuts and food staples such as plantain. [25] The Olowo agreed to treat the Oba of Benin as suzerain by surrendering to him, in accordance with accepted political conventions of states in most of the African forests, certain animals which, when killed by any hunter, were regarded as special royal spoils. The Olowo would send such animals (the tiger, leopard and others), if killed by any hunter in the Owo kingdom, to the palace of Benin. Finally, and most importantly, Owo agreed to send from time to time, an Owo prince to reside in the Benin palace. Apparently, the arrangement was that when a new king ascended the Benin throne, a young Owo prince would go to his palace and live there as one of the young men who attended on him as sword bearers. In the course of time, it also became the practice that a newly installed king of Owo would visit Benin to receive some sort of mark of approval of the Oba of Benin. [26]

For Owo, the political and other ramifications of these developments were profound. For a start, there erupted a spate of anger and of scapegoat finding. A holder of the title of Oshodi was somehow held accountable for some show of weakness by the Owo

---

[25] Egharevba, Short History, 16.

[26] A piece of chalk was given to the Olowo or his representative by the Oba of Benin as a sign of his approval for the new Olowo to begin his rule in Owo. NAI: see a letter of petition written in 1945 by Adedapo Orimolade, cited earlier.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

kingdom. The incumbent of the title was executed and the title abolished.[27] Most probably, other prominent citizens suffered as well. But, as time went on, a more significant response emerged among Owo people- they began to take serious, deliberate steps to strengthen their kingdom. The old, exclusive, sort of leadership constituted by the Ighare chiefs was pushed back as Owo sought and found talent in all sections of the populace. New immigrants into the city, especially if they led large followings or possessed some special talent, were quickly elevated to positions of influence and power. The Owo kings themselves became the visionary promoters of this change, especially because the change redounded to their increased authority. With the new arrivals and the hitherto politically insignificant sections of the population leading the way, the whole of Owo rallied round their king.

The peace with Benin produced great dividends. Benin armies sidestepped the Owo kingdom and went to fight in the countries of the Akoko and Ekiti. Because the people of these hilly countries would not readily surrender to Benin, Benin armies had to frequently enter their territories. A Benin outpost soon developed in the Ekiti kingdom of Akure and a smaller one in Ikere. By the late sixteenth century, Benin forces had penetrated as far north as the kingdom of Otun in northern Ekiti. [28] The Akoko country bore most of the brunt of the invasions. Because the Akoko country stood tantalizingly close to the northern homeland of the Benin kingdom, the Benin authorities developed great ambitions over that country. But while Benin forces might have little or no difficulty in overrunning Akoko villages, they had no success in holding them under Benin rule. In Ekiti, Benin did not fare any better- beyond the kingdoms of Akure and Ikere. The

[27] Ashara, The History, 24.
[28] Obayemi, 'The Yoruba-and the Edo -Speaking Peoples and their Neighbors,'

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

withdrawing Benin armies presumed to appoint in many places in Ekiti and Akoko persons who were supposed to be representatives of Benin's power; but the positions of such representatives were usually hopeless. Therefore, as soon as the Benin troops left, such persons usually settled down to earn a living for themselves as traders, artisans or herbalists.

While Benin was thus engaged in frequent, politically fruitless, incursions into the Ekiti and Akoko countries, Owo solidified itself at home and steadily grew prosperous, especially through trade. Under protection of their kingdom's agreement with Benin, Owo traders flocked to Benin City and other centers of trade, all the way down to the ports. Benin traders also enjoyed special safety to trade in Owo and a sizeable Edo trading community emerged in Owo. Gradually, however, most of the merchandise brought from the Benin markets to Owo, as most of those carried from Owo to Benin was carried not by Benin traders but by Owo traders.

This development was a big boost to Owo's economic life, in view of developments in the Ekiti and Akoko countries in the further hinterland. In those countries, bona fide Benin traders fared much better than the agents of Benin's power. As more and more foreign articles imported to West Africa by Europeans reached the towns and villages of these countries, Benin traders were more and more welcome to trade and live there. Benin trading communities sprang up almost everywhere. Owo became the great entrepot from which most merchandise reached the Ekiti and Akoko countries and to which export articles from there came for assembling for onward transportation to the Benin market centers. In fact, a major part of what was called Benin trading community in many an

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ekiti or Akoko town consisted of Owo traders because they had the trading experience and in most cases they spoke a form of the Benin language.

As earlier pointed out, Owo had had a growing culture of manufacturing and artwork from early times. In the period here under consideration, that culture grew tremendously. Owo became a major producer of metal utensils and implements, beads and cloths. Owo also became a famous home of art and artisans. Owo's bead jewelers made crowns for kings of Yoruba states far and wide. The same jewelers made whole garments of beads for the Olowos for their ceremonial regalia, garments similar to the ones worn by Edo kings on certain festivals.

In these circumstances, Owo experienced a great cultural ferment featuring especially art (mostly sculptures in wood, ivory and metal) and music. Bands offering various types of Owo music bands [29]went as traveling musicians to most parts of eastern Yorubaland. On the whole, this was a period of the beginnings of a golden age for Owo.

During this time, also, great developments were taking place in Owo. New chieftaincies started to be conferred on deserving individuals both indigenous and foreign born. The Ajana chieftaincy title, one of the most important in ritual performance, apart from the Ighares chiefs, has an interesting connection with the Sashere title. During the reign of Olowo Ogeja, one Alagosen left Oke-Afa in Oke-Agbe, Akoko country, after he had lost his fight for the title of Ajana. He came to Owo and decided to settle there. Alagosen was an adept hunter and a strategist and he soon came to the notice of Olowo Ogeja, who made Alagosen the leader of the hunters' guild. It was during that time that the Utelu people were preying on Owo subjects, raiding the area for captives. As a result

[29] E.g. Igbade, Igbedu, Osiji, Laghalogho, Agogo, Ogagago, Are, Apapara and Aje and latter, Reso, to mention a few bands for men and Esa and Arile for women, etc

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of this threat to the fledgling Owo kingdom, Olowo Ogeja commissioned Alagosen and his guild of hunters to hunt down the marauders. Alagosen did and succeeded in capturing the Utelu party under their leader, Oneh Amunrun Mada, who eventually became the Oshorun to the Olowo. However, the Alagosen family did not receive any compensation for these exploits until later, during the reign of Olowo Alamunren, cI462-1534AD.[30]

During the reign of Olowo Omasan, (c1534-1554AD), a herbalist came from Ijumu in the Iyagba country through Utaja, Idanre, a neighboring state southwest of Owo. People remember him as *Baba Akete Ijumu, (father from Ijumu in the inner room),* who was always sitting up on his terracotta bed in the inner room (*akete*) when divining. He was a spiritualist (*babalawo*) and a wise man (*adahunse*), a professional *Ifa* priest. After many years' stay at Owo, he came to the notice of Olowo Omasan because of his prescience in the *Ifa* oracle divination and he became a confidant of the king. Because of his counsel and advice to the Olowo on matters of state at very critical points, the kingdom started to expand and prosper. The Olowo Omasan, after he had proscribed the title of Oshodi, [31] made Baba Ijumu to act in chief Oshodi's position temporarily. The Oshodi was second in rank to the Olowo and also presided over the large Igboroko quarter before his removal and the abrogation of the title. Baba Ijumu soon found himself acting in this capacities and this practice later hardened into custom. Baba Akete retained his title of Baba Ijumu (or Baba Ojumu, the Owo rendition of the title), as the title holder came to be known later

[30] Ashara, The History, in actual fact, it was not Alagosen who received the title of Ajana but his descendant. Alagosen had, however, received his reward in other areas. Henceforth, he became the guardian of all the captives and slaves. When the Ajana [30]chieftaincy title was adopted in Owo and conferred, the incumbent also became the head of Isaipen quarters, home of the slaves and captives.

[31] Because the incumbent had been implicated in the last successful invasion of Owo during the reign of Ozolua, the Oba of Benin.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and his position of second in rank to the Olowo. He also occupied the site of the residence of Oshodi at Ehin-Ogbe quarters. The Ojumu [32]has continued to live at his bestowal at Ehin-Ogbe, the strangers' quarters, ever since instead of moving to Igboroko, his own quarter.

Chief Ojumu became a very rich and prosperous notable in the town of Owo as a result of his position of second in rank to the Olowo and maybe, also because of his prescience in the *Ifa* oracle divination. He continued to play pivotal roles in the Owo political system. At one point, Baba Akete suggested to the Olowo to stop the habit of confiscating the property of dead chiefs. Because of this practice, which may have emanated from similar practices by the Oba of Benin,[33] many men in Owo were running away from taking chieftaincy titles for fear that when they died, all their belongings would go to the king. Baba Akete suggested to Olowo Omasan that instead of the Benin practice in which the king enriched himself with the property of a deceased chief, the Olowo should demand a goat and request the family to nominate a successor to the dead chief. The Olowo would then confer the title on the chief's relative (son or brother). The successor would inherit the title as well as the responsibility pertaining to the position. Because of the earlier practice, there was no stability in the chieftaincy system of Owo as individuals died with their titles. The Olowo accepted this suggestion and it became the convention of the kingdom for the Olowo to receive a goat at the passing of a chief and confer the vacant title on his relative instead of allowing the title to go into abeyance. This was received with joy by the Owo people and the fame of Baba Ojumu shot through

---

[32] Ojumu: Baba Akete, Akensusika, Akintinmehin, Erinoma, Ajimala, Akinyere, Alashela, Ijamuwagun, Irungbe, Abiruwa, Akenjogunla, Aje (*alias Ologbojo, oko ma sha, ojo pa 'gogo dahun okunrin, La Mothe Dudu, meaning Black La Mothe*), Fadowole, Fadeyi, Fagbemi, Idowu Fadowole, Ayo Fagbemi* (*the present incumbent)

[33] See Egharevba, A Short History, and 'Continuiy or Change?' JAH

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the roof, it spread far and wide for his wisdom. As a result, many individuals started to take chieftaincy titles and the ranks of the chieftaincy title in Owo started to expand.

Baba Akete also predicted that one of the Olowo's daughters; a lame princess[34] would be the mother of a son. The son was to be conferred with a chieftaincy title with enhancements, because the child would grow up to be a warrior for Owo and his activities would expand the reaches of Owo and increase the population of the kingdom.

However, there was a problem - the princess had been in isolation and grew up without anybody noticing her existence as she was kept in a windowless house.[35] This was meant to hide the shame of her lameness from public glare. As a result, although she grew up to be a beautiful girl, only a few people knew about her existence as only a few individuals were allowed to get close to her in the windowless and one door 'shotgun' house. One day when her father, the Olowo Omasan came to visit, her two nurses complained to him that the thatched roof of their home was leaking and every time it rained, they had to place receptacles on the floor of the house to get the rain drops falling through the leaks in the roof and sometime, they would be drenched. They requested the king to send some one over to help repair the leaks. The Olowo Omasan later discussed this problem with his servant, the Oshorun, who was, at that point still living in the Olowo's palace, ministering to the spiritual needs of the Olowo.

The Oshorun was instructed to go over to the forbidden building overlooking the palace, to mend the leaking roof himself. He was not to look down and was not told who was living in the building. As he went about mending the roof, working from the ladder put on the roof of the building, he felt a pin prick on his foot and looking down he

[34] She became lame as a result of the disease known as Polio.
[35] 'Ile ti ko ni ferese,' meaning: 'A house without a window.'

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

observed a beautiful damsel, moving around on all fours. He quickly descended and they both started to talk. It was then that the secret that has been kept from everybody by Olowo Omasan, which has to do with his lame daughter, was revealed to the Oshorun. Eventually both the Oshorun and the lame princess became friends and were intimate and soon she became pregnant.

The king later learnt about the princess' pregnancy and on a close inquiry about who was responsible for the pregnancy, he discovered that it was the Oshorun. As a reward, the king moved Oshorun out of the palace and placed him in a building across from the palace, overlooking the Ilede market, Oja Oba. He later became the Uwangwe, a position in which he presided over the ritual of worshipping the Olowo's head and spirit in heaven rather than doing it himself.

The Ifa oracle was consulted again and it predicted that the lame princess would give birth to a male child and that the boy should be made a chief because he would grow up to play a leading role in the affairs of the kingdom. But the oba, Olowo Omasan, died shortly before the birth of the baby. Before his death, however, the Olowo had discussed the possibility of the new baby being made a chief with the Ighares and, in fact, the traditions say that he had paid for such a title whatever it was going to be. When the baby was born it was a boy and it became very easy for the new Olowo Omaro to confer a title thanking everybody concerned for the possibility of a male, a son being born by the lame princess. Thanks were offered to the Oshorun-Ode and the grandfather of the new chief,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Olowo Omasan posthumously and the Ighares of Iloro. The title then became 'Osere,' meaning, 'Thanks!'[36] The Osere title is third in rank[37] to the Olowo, next to chief Ojumu.

Oshogboye was the last Owo prince to live as hostage in the Benin court, under the agreement between Owo and Benin. According to both Owo and Benin traditions, Oshogboye 'escaped' from the Benin palace – meaning that he left secretly, without the knowledge or consent of the Oba of Benin and returned to Owo. It is not known what prompted his escape. There is no indication whatsoever in the traditions that he suffered any mistreatment or indignity in the Benin palace. In fact, the available indications are that, in the palace, he lived a sheltered and comfortable life. Each Owo princely hostage in the Benin palace was included in the special class of young men known as 'omo-ada, ' ceremonial sword bearers, who attended on the king at all his public appearances and engagements. The Omo-ada was the closest person to the Oba; they followed him and stood at close range before and behind him, and all other officials had to stand at some distance from them. As such, they were greatly respected in the palace and the city, and also absolutely no citizen would dare lay hands on them. But some sources indicate that while Oshogboye was not treated with indignity personally, the Owo people who brought the items of tributes to the Benin palace did not escape such indignity. It is said that on one occasion, the people who brought a dead tiger to the Oba of Benin had to wait for nine days before they could see the king and by that time the carcass of the tiger had become rotten and smelled bad odor. Because of that, the Oba ordered the people to cook the rotten carcass and eat it. This was a form of punishment inflicted on the people

[36]Osere means 'Thank you' (may be to the Oshorun-Ode). The Oseres: Olusere, Akele, Oluyamaka, Aderenwa, Omojuokun, Elewuokun, Ademisugha, Alaluwoye, Adeluwoye, Akenlana, Osepolo, Alabundulu, Asenla, Alapelo, Udamoghola, Olakunori, Ajindasile, Olanipekun, Oladosu* (present incumbent)

[37] The 'Esere' title is also third in rank to the Oba of Benin.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

because they brought a rotten animal to the palace of the Oba. This treatment angered Oshogboye and he decided to do something about Owo's circumstances at that point. He made up his mind to leave the Oba's palace at the most opportune time.

Oshogboye's unauthorized departure from the Benin palace was a serious breach of the agreement between his Owo kingdom and the Benin kingdom. It is significant, therefore, that the Oba of Benin made no serious effort to retrieve him or have him returned by his own people. The traditions have it that some messengers came for him, but that they were easily persuaded that he was too sick to make the journey back to Benin.

Owo traditions suggest that, by the time of Oshogboye in the Benin palace in the last years of the sixteenth century, the Benin kingdom was already experiencing serious troubles of its own. Various internal conflicts were sapping the energy of the kingdom, so that its military enterprise into other lands were getting weaker and fewer. Patriotic traditions in Owo paint Oshogboye as a magnificently talented young man who read the situation in Benin correctly and astutely and decided that the time had come for Owo to assert its freedom. In running away from the Benin palace, he was striking the first blow for the freedom of his people.

About one year after Oshogboye's return from Benin, the reigning Olowo Omaro died, and Oshogboye was crowned in his place. The date, according to Egharevba and Ashara, was about c1600AD. Ehengbuda (king of Benin from c1578 to 1616, according to Egharevba) reigned in Benin. As a result of Oshogboye's ascension, an important era in Owo's history dawned.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

As soon as Oshogboye was crowned king, he called on his people to start constructing a ring of defenses around their city. The defenses, known as 'Yara', moats, consisted of one line of deep wide ditch dug all round the city in such a way that the dug up earth was heaped on the side of the city. The ditch, about fifteen feet wide and nearly as many feet deep, and the hill of dirt, rising more than ten feet all around the city, together constituted a very formidable defense. Special species of thorn bush were planted on the outside slope of the man-made hill, to impede climbing from the bottom of the ditch. In the rainy season, and for much of the year, parts of the ditch held water, thus forming a moat.

The 'Yara' was the typical form of town defense in the forests of southern Yorubaland, as opposed to the more open grasslands of northern Yorubaland where standing mud walls were more popular. The 'Yara' is a very old Yoruba method of town defense, as is evidenced by the fact that very ancient 'Yara' systems have been found around the city of Ife. Oshogboye's 'Yara' is widely reputed to have been one of the most impressive in Yorubaland for a long time. It is said that the whole project was completed within a short time (some traditions say less than two years) intensely mobilizing the entire city's manpower. Its accomplishment testifies to Oshogboye's enormous popularity among his subjects.

While this construction work was going on, Oshogboye began to create a new Owo army. Through rigorous training, he converted the male population of the city into an efficient mass army, commanded by chiefs appointed by the king. [38] At last, the Benin king roused himself to do something about Oshogboye. A small detachment of troops

[38] The first Commander-in –Chief of the Owo army was Sashere Olulu. He planned the strategies and provided the means by which the Owo defense forces were able to combat the Benin forces sent to retrieve Oshogboye and it appears Owo defeated Benin in the ensuing war.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

came to Owo to demand Ohogboye's return to Benin.[39] The troops went back with the report that Oshogboye did not only refuse to come, but also that he was very well prepared to fight the Oba of Benin. The full Benin army was therefore ordered out against Owo.

The war was short and decisive. The Owo army under the command of the Sashere, exploiting its knowledge of the forests, waited for the Benin army outside the village of Ute. The Benin army marched into an ambush and quickly disintegrated. Large sections of the Benin army surrendered and were brought back to Owo, where most of them later decided to settle and make home. Many of those who managed to flee from the battle thought it would be too much shame to return to Benin. Therefore they chose to settle in villages near Owo. These swelled the populations of Ijagba and Sobe, which already had substantial numbers of Edo settlers.

The most important consequence of this war, strangely, was a huge upsurge of commercial and cultural contacts between Owo and Benin. In Benin, most citizens cursed Oshogboye, of course, as the traitor who rejected all the honors of the Benin palace and ran away, only to humiliate an army of the Benin king later. But as for Benin traders, they were glad to have in Owo a king who had grown up as an Edo man, who knew Benin intimately and spoke the Edo language fluently, who lived more or less like a Benin king and, very importantly, who attached great importance to trade and firmly maintained law and order on the forest roads. Benin traders flooded into Owo in larger numbers than ever before. Some established their base in Owo and from there organized their trade into the

[39] Although both Egharevba and Ashara say that Oshogboye rubbed evil smelling things on his body, pretending that he was sick when the Oba's messengers came to fetch him and was therefore left alone, the evidence from interviews conducted at Owo by this writer tend to suggest that Oshogboye had already become Olowo before the Benin authorities sent for him. He told them, according to the people interviewed, that he would not go back to Benin and that he had already become Olowo.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

countries of the further hinterland. Some even relocated to Owo as home. With the traders came large numbers of Edo artisans and craftsmen. Owo men and women joined in the exploding trade, crafts and arts. Many joined in the long distance trade to the further hinterland, and some established trading bases in such centers as Akure, Ikere, Ado, Ikare, and even as far north as Otun and Ila. Somewhat fearfully, at first, but later increasingly confidently, Owo traders took to the Benin road and became a major factor in the commercial life of Benin and other Edo towns. In the city of Benin, a sizeable Owo trading community settled in a quarter known as Idimogho (Owo's quarter), an integral part of Benin City till today.

Owo became the most famous and the greatest commercial center in all of eastern Yoruba countries, its image even considerably overshadowing that of Benin. Owo craftsmen and artisans spread out and became very important in the industrial lives of towns in the Ekiti and Akoko countries- in metal fabrication, beads and jewelry. Most of the best crowns and other beaded adornments for royalty in these areas were made in Owo or by Owo artisans.

In Oshogboye's years, then, Owo was a place of great commerce, industry and wealth, of art, fashion and beauty. This was when traveling musical groups from Owo began to take new types of music far and wide in eastern and central Yorubaland- a cultural flowering, which continued even into the twentieth century. Oshogboye himself brought some of the prevalent color into the institutions and practices of government. He created new distinctive regalia for his high chiefs, some like *'ewu egha,'* starched ornamented garment, *'orufanran,' (martial uniform for the High Chiefs),'* some for state appearances

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and others, like 'ewu gbegbe,' [40]velvet garments, as awards for meritorious service to the state. Respect for the king became so great that laws were proclaimed barring commoners from using footwear and certain types of umbrella on or near the palace grounds. In emulation of the Benin rulers, he introduced the use of Agokun, a beaded cup-shaped jewelry, which the chiefs wore as a large necklace extending up to cover the mouth from dust during festive occasions in Owo such as the Igogo and the Ore, and the Umoba band, an orchestra of the princes was also instituted among the princes.

Owo people hold Oshogboye as the greatest king in their history. Not only is he honored as the king who broke the Benin hold on their kingdom, he is also remembered for introducing various political, economic and social changes that, together, transformed Owo into a more prosperous and powerful kingdom and made her one of the greatest kingdoms in the Yoruba world in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Owo history really focuses very heavily upon Oshogboye- his time and his accomplishments - his personality so that the impression we have of him is that he was a creative dynamic ruler. When he left Owo and went to live in the Benin kingdom as a young man, he lived in the Benin court as a hostage. While there, he earned himself a lot of respect and a lot of honor and because of his character and comportment, he became a confidant of the Oba of Benin and then when he left and came back home, he began to build around himself a new sort of kingdom; he revolutionized the kingdom of Owo. He changed it in many sorts of ways – strengthening the kingdom in many ways. He may have been the person who finally brought Owo to its highest development – the use of

[40] He gave big garments to his chiefs. One of them was Chief Oshuporu Oshobiken, who was given a velvet garment, *ewu gbegbe* and that became part of his *oriki,* appellation, henceforth as he was the only chief given this right by the Olowo in the 17th century.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

abundance of superior coral beads (red jasper) in its royal and chiefly regalia, for example, started during the reign of Oshogboye.

He reorganized and revolutionized the kingdom, strengthened the defense structures and inaugurated the construction of the moats and earthworks whose relics remain till today. Oshogboye built the first moats around Owo, maybe, an imitation of the one in Benin. This initiative later spread to other parts of the Yoruba country, particularly in the neighboring states of Ekiti. For example, in Ado-Ekiti, where the idea of moats also became part of the defense mechanism, the Ado authorities built a great moat at that time also. A network of moats developed around Owo to defend Owo against Benin's sudden attacks. And from that time, according to patriotic Owo traditions, Owo became more or less quite equal to Benin.

The political influence of Benin had grown slowly and gradually over Owo's political life. With Oshogboye, it increased enormously. Oshogboye sought to create another Benin, with great walls like Benin, with great castles (*apapara*) like Benin, with great military establishments like Benin, with a king like the king of Benin. And he succeeded in these endeavors. Happy with the new power of their kingdom and its ability to conquer its weaker neighbors, the Owo people lauded Oshogboye to high heavens. It was not until after Oshogboye that the truth became clear – that the Owo kingdom had been robbed of its traditional system of careful constitutional balances and compromises. While Oshogboye lived, there was a strong and charismatic personality to restrain the worst possible consequences of these developments. After he left the scene, serious problems surfaced. We will discuss these in the next chapter.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Oshogboye's legacy and the Strong Kingdom, c1648- c1833AD.

Oshogboye's reign left a legacy of greatness and massive changes in the Yoruba outpost at the eastern frontier of the Yoruba country. Owo was poised on becoming a strong kingdom in eastern Yorubaland. But Oshogboye's reign also left a legacy of serious problems because of the in-grafting of the Benin mode of administration and management style into the existing Owo (Yoruba) culture in the political, economic, and social spheres.

Following Oshogboye's reign, the chieftaincy system slipped into chaos. The Ighare group of chiefs, the original core of the chieftaincy system, was gradually stripped of almost all its powers and functions until, in the early part of the 19th century, it was no more than a group responsible for the state rituals. For centuries, the Ighare chiefs had been the one solid group that could restrain royal excesses and even effectively oppose an over–ambitious or tyrannical Olowo. Successive Olowos, starting with Renrengenjen, had slowly reduced the influence of the Ighare chiefs by creating chieftaincies loaded with influence and authority, many of them held by persons who owed their elevation to individual kings and operated in ways that promoted and upheld royal prerogatives and absolutism. Even among such chieftaincies, no clear order of seniority existed any more.

It had been the original arrangement that there would be seniority based on the times of creation of chieftaincies so that each title would be senior to the one created after it. That was the universal principle in all Yoruba kingdoms. In Owo, however, that arrangement was thrown overboard, as the Olowos began to fall into the habit of creating and elevating chieftaincies to suit their purposes. In fact, the tendency was that each Olowo tried to outdo his predecessors in the creation of highly bloated, highly glamorized

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

chieftaincy titles for his relatives, friends and cronies, as well as in the pushing down of formerly exalted chieftaincies. The Oshorun (or Sashere) title tumbled from its lofty position. The Ojumu and Oshowe titles were created at the same time by the Olowo Omasan and belonged to the same level as first class titles but the Oshowe ended up as a second -class title while the Ojumu title managed to stay aloft, close to the top. As will be seen later, the Olowo Alubiolokun created the titles of Aruwaji, Elegba, Egbewa and Owashoyen before the Olowo Otutubiosun created the Elerewe title, but the Elerewe became far superior to the other four because of the connection of the first incumbent of the Elerewe title, Akenti, to the throne. Akenti was a brother of Olowo Otutubiosun. [1]

The newly created chieftaincies became, without the Ighare chieftaincies, the new Inner Council around the king-an Inner Council that did not have a name because it had no traditional basis for its existence.[2] By the end of Oshogboye's reign, the Ighare chiefs had become virtual outsiders to the governance of the Owo kingdom, a kingdom of their creation. The other chieftaincies were endlessly rivaling one another for royal elevation and endlessly being reshuffled down or up, and a configuration of power (as well as a disorder in chiefly ranks), unknown to Yoruba political culture, existed. Given the nature of the society's composition, various groups in the kingdom were being alienated and inter-group hatred was increasingly being fostered, with all these increasing dangerously. Generally ingrained, culture based, expectations made the Benin type of almost total royal power impossible, and therefore a collapse of the whole system seemed a possibility.

The one pillar of Owo's indigenous constitution that continued to stand was the provision for the selection of new kings from a pool of royal princes. But, in the

[1] It will be recalled that this practice was started by Olowo Ogeja and it gradually culminated in the creation of the Ojomo title in c1782.
[2] Beeley, 'Intelligence Report,' 27.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

generalized distortions of the political system, it, too, suffered distortion. As the new high chiefs tended to lower the dignity of the process, the Ighare chiefs opted for the Benin system of automatic father to son succession. That was adopted for some time but it soon became unpopular with the masses. As a result, the new 'Inner Council' was able to resuscitate the selection principle. And what that did was to increase their power and influence, unrestrained by the traditional ethos of their high calling. With the chiefs, the selection process became something to be grabbed by any candidate, suitable or not, who commanded some means of procuring their support or of twisting their hands, or who was amenable to deals that promised certain chiefs some benefits.

In other scenarios, some of the powerful chiefs would spearhead the installation of a particular candidate, suitable or not, for the throne. Such chiefs would then turn around to hold the new king to ransom by making demands on him that he might not be able to fulfill. When the Olowo did not fulfill their expectation, failed to adhere to the promises made or if he tried to assert himself as the pre-eminent individual whose will should prevail, he then ran the risk of being alienated by the chiefs who had supported him. In the interplay of forces in the political system of Owo, more often than not, the Olowos somehow found themselves at the losing end. This scenario would play itself out many times over in the course of Owo history.

In c1648, according to Owo traditions, Alubiolokun succeeded Oshogboye without any dispute but he soon ran into some difficulties with the chiefs over the sharing of chieftaincy fees and other emoluments. Since the positions of the new cadre of high chiefs were not clearly defined in the political system, they did not have any precedents to guide them. Resulting from his problems with the high chiefs, Alubiolokun's rule

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

became weakened.[3] He was accused of being autocratic, in particular, of wrongly creating the chieftaincy title of Aruwaji. Alubiolokun had placed the incumbent of the Aruwaji title at the Igboroko quarter and had built a lofty compound for him, although he was not one of the high chiefs entitled to such accoutrements.[4] According to the traditions, to expand the classified ranks of Owo chiefs, the king had to obtain the approval of the Ighare chiefs. Alubiolokun did not do that and so the Ighare chiefs viewed his action as arbitrary. Because it served the interest of the high chiefs, members of the 'inner council,' they spearheaded the outcry that the title of Aruwaji generated.

Alubiolokun was obligated to wage wars against some surrounding settlements in Akoko and southern Ekiti because they failed to pay their yearly tributes to Owo. He led the Owo forces to the subject towns, fought well and returned victorious, bringing much spoils and many of the leaders of the settlements back to Owo as captives. But many of the high chiefs still continued to harbor resentment towards the king. The estrangement of Alubiolokun and his chiefs became so serious that the chiefs plotted against him and had him drowned at the Ogbese River.[5] Alubiolokun's sudden death sparked off riots, resulting in the death, according to tradition, of about three hundred citizens, some of whom were enemies and others friends of the deceased king. In the ensuing melee, many homes were set on fire and the town faced total disintegration. But the high chiefs

[3] It is said that Alubiolokun shed innocent blood following the protest over his actions and for this his enemies would not forgive him. Ashara counts Alubiolokun as one of the bad kings of Owo though he may not be as bad as some of the later Olowos.

[4] Chief Ashara reminds us of the error in this move. According to him, the Owo chieftaincy titles rule of 'c1334' had classified certain titles as high chiefs and others as second-class and the rest as ordinary. In addition to that, however, it is said that Alubiolokun shed innocent blood meaning that he executed those chiefs who opposed his arbitrary rule.

[5] Legends collected by this writer say that the Ifa oracle had directed that Alubiolokun worship the Ogbese River for the prosperity of Owo. He was to appear in his full royal regalia and dance to the beat of the olushorope drums when doing this and then sacrifice a cow at the river side. The legends say that as he was dancing before the Ogbese River, his foot slipped and he fell into the river. Under the full weight of heavy royal regalia, he sank into the river and drowned. His supporters said that he was pushed in by some of the chiefs. Chief Fayemiwo: personal communication, 1965.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

hurriedly rallied behind a prospective candidate to the throne in order to restore order and normalcy.

The roots of the unhappy events at Owo at that point could be traced to the legacy of Oshogboye. He had left a legacy that continued to haunt Owo after his demise. What had held the Owo kingdom together during Oshogboye's regime were the personality of Oshogboye himself and the emergency of the times, resulting from confrontations with the Benin kingdom. Under such circumstances, Oshogboye, by nature a strong and charismatic character, had ruled as an autocrat – more or less - like a Benin monarch. [6] His subjects had rallied to him and supported him throughout his reign, and he had made his kingdom very confident of warding off Benin attacks. But his successes against Benin aggression had reduced the need for his type of strong government and his death had removed the charismatic leader. When Alubiolokun came to the throne, Owo needed to return to the characteristic Yoruba system of limited monarchy in which the king rules with the regular advice of his high chiefs. Some of Oshogboye's successors did not get the point. Their attempts to rule like Oshogboye created a situation of endemic trouble henceforth.

Apart from the bloody riots in Owo city, the fight between Alubiolokun and his chiefs weakened Owo in other ways. Some subject states, a few towns in the Akoko country, seized this opportunity to rebel. Again, the chiefs had to intervene to bring the restive subject peoples under Owo control.

The character of the next Olowo, Otutubiosun, (meaning the calm one) is a good indicator of who the victors were in the confrontation between the king and the Edibo Olowo chiefs. Effective power was fully in the hands of the chiefs, as Otutubiosun was a nominee and protégé of the high chiefs. A quiet, unassuming and self-effacing middle-

[6] It is said that Oshogboye was all Benin when he returned to Owo from his sojourn in the Benin court. Chief Adafin Daramola, the Akowa of Iloro quarter, 1962-1968, Chief Adafin Fayemiwo, Elerewe Notes.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

aged man, [7] Otutubiosun only reigned but did not rule because the high chiefs were too powerful for him to control. It is said that he was entirely under the thumb of some of the over-ambitious chiefs headed by the clique comprising the Ojumu Ajinmala, the Sashere Tapere Kankanmunna, (Commander of the Owo forces), and later, Sashere Oluwoye and Oshere Udamoghola, the war chief. The creation of chief Elerewe, [8] who immediately joined the ranks of the high chiefs, was the only initiative undertaken by Otutubiosun in terms of the governance of the kingdom.

One assertive act of the king recorded by the sources relates to his handling of a rebellion by Ikare. To bring the Ikare people, a small population at that time, mainly at the Okorun quarters, back to the service of Owo, Otutubiosun sent the Sashere Oluwoye to Akoko to deal with the towns that were in rebellion. Owo traditions say that at the approach of the Owo forces, Ikare was deserted. Owo troops then entered and occupied the town. After a few days, the Ikare people started to return from their hideouts on the hills, with the thought that the Owo militia had left. As they began to sing and dance, thinking that all was clear, they walked into the arms of Owo fighters and Ikare had to return to her erstwhile relationship with Owo. As a result of that, the other Akoko towns, such as Oka, sued for peace.

On the whole, Owo traditions remember the era of Otutubiosun, which lasted nearly three decades, as an era of peace, consolidation and contentment. Otutubiosun, whose personal name was Obajogho, was a very gentle and quiet individual and he lived a quiet life throughout his reign. Under him, the powerful chiefs of the Inner Council appear to have completely usurped the power of both the Olowo and that of the Ighare chiefs. The

---

[7] Elerewe notes, Ashara, The History, Beeley, Intelligence Reports, etc.

7. Olowo Otuntun-bioson created the chieftaincy title of Elerewe for one of his brothers, Akenti. Chief Abraham Ojo Olakunori showed this writer his private notes that categorically say, without quoting any other source, that the title was created in c1690. It appears that the name of the Olowo Otuntun-bioson (as cool as the juice of an orange) is an indication of the ineffectiveness of his rule.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

traditions do not speak of any specific program undertaken by the chiefs, in view of the enormous power that they wielded at that point. However, it appears that initially, the chiefs used their power to safeguard the kingdom from external attack. They prevented an outbreak of a civil war following the assassination of Olowo Alubiolokun and they dealt with the rebellion of Ikare and Oka in the Akoko country. [9] But their success in Akoko was incomplete as some of the other towns in the Akoko country continued to rebel intermittently. [10]

When Otutubiosun died, the chiefs threw open the contest to all eligible princes to vie for the throne. The ensuing contest resulted in a bloody strife in which the high chiefs had to preside over the execution of two princes. Eventually, one of the candidates, Ajagbusi-Ekun, became Olowo.[11] The other contestants, who lost the contest, did not give up the struggle. It is said that they entered into a conspiracy to undermine the new king. When this plot was discovered, a few of them were executed and the others fled the kingdom. Following this, there was peace and quiet for some time. [12] But it was only for some time, as the unrest returned soon in full force, resulting in continual tension and acrimony.

The reasons for the unrest are obvious enough. The selection process, which resulted in the selection of Ajagbusi-Ekun, was tense. Each contestant had the support of a large group of partisans. The sources seem to suggest that the number of contestants was large. The contest generated noisy commotions – perhaps even physical conflicts - between the

[9] Although the Sashere of Owo was sent to suppress the rebellious subject states of Ikare and the Owa Ale was forced to continue his annual tribute to Owo, the Akoko states continued to contest their subjection to the Owo authorities. At every stage, Owo had to send punitive expeditions to the area to keep the restive subject peoples in their place.

[10] Some subject states, particularly Ikare, Idoani, Ifon and Okeluse continued to resist Owo, some times with force of arms, though they were not sufficiently strong enough to permanently succeed in their resistance.

[11] Ashara, The History, 56

[12] Chief Ashara says that Ajagbusi-Ekun's ascension marked the first time there was an open contest for the throne of the Olowo. This may not be accurate in view of the tumultuous ascession of Olowo Imagele in c1430AD.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

partisan groups. The cognomen, Ajagbusi-Ekun, (the fighting tiger with renown prowess), given to the victor in the contest, strongly suggests that this prince commanded the strongest and most assertive partisan group. The chiefs seem to have merely succumbed to the strongest prince. In normal times, when the operation of the selection process was mature and solemn, a prince wielding such naked strength would hardly be considered at all. In these times, however, power was decisive. The inevitable corollary to this was that those who lost the contest tended to keep the noise, the roughness and even the violent conflicts going in the streets even after the new king had been crowned. Such behavior was treason, of course. So, at last, the chiefs rose to their responsibility and, under the authority of the new king, arrested, tried and executed the most obstreperous of the princes- thus affirming the rule that the selection of the Olowo by the chiefs was final and that any agitation against it was high crime.

The political troubles did not immediately end, however. Throughout Ajagbusi-Ekun's reign, Owo continued to experience political eruptions from time to time. During the selection of the next few Olowos, some civil commotions still occurred. Owo traditions describe this period as one of troubles. Inevitably, these political troubles had negative effects on the economic life of the kingdom for some time. Many people migrated away from Owo as a result of all this, of which some were disgruntled adherents of princes who lost contests for the throne of Olowo. But while she lost citizens to emigration, Owo also received immigrants from various parts of Yorubaland. At the same time, the institutions of state continued to grind along and the festivals, such as the Ore and the Igogo, continued to be celebrated annually.

Ajagbusi-Ekun, who succeeded Otutubiosun, appears to have been more militant than his predecessor but, according to Owo traditions, he was still not able to assert himself over the powerful high chiefs. After Ajagbusi-Ekun had settled down on the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

throne, the high chiefs directed his attention to the need to bring the rebellious Akoko towns to subjection. The prosecution of the resultant wars seems to have diverted attention from the situation at Owo and because of this external preoccupation, the king and his chiefs hardly had time to pay attention to developments at home. [13]

In the circumstances, Owo's internal instability led to continued economic difficulties, unrest and tension among the people. As earlier stated, many people were leaving never to return because of persecution by either the Olowo or the high chiefs. Many of the laws enacted at that time demanded the execution of those who broke such laws. As a result, once under indictment, some of the people would flee the kingdom. Some of those who fled the kingdom went to Ode Itsekiri (Warri) and some went to Eko (Lagos), a new settlement on the lagoon to the west.

Ajagbusi-Ekun soon found an outlet for the restive spirits of the youths in a series of wars against his neighbors, both far and near. With that pre-occupation, Owo's rulers did not pay much attention to the situation at home as Owo's success abroad seemed to ameliorate conditions at home. The capital of the kingdom is said to have become a war camp run as a war establishment where the care of the wounded in battle and acrimony over the sharing of war booty competed with each other.[14]

By profession, Ajagbusi-Ekun was a big game hunter and a trader in elephant tusks to Benin. [15] He was also the architect of a greater Owo as he actualized the process of the expansion of the Owo kingdom. The latter part of Ajagbusi-Ekun's reign thus witnessed a new surge of Owo's expansionism into totally new territories- especially into the Afenmai area beyond Akoko, deeper into Southern Ekiti, to more distant places like Irun,

[13] Owo town, during the period, became a sort of war camp, a presage of what Ibadan looked like in the 19th century. Beeley, 'Intelligence Report,' para. 54, p.77

[14] Beeley, 'Intelligence Report on Owo /Ifon Districts,' 1934, para. 77

[15] Ajagbusi-Ekun had a farm near the Ala River known as 'Owu Ajagbusi,' meaning: 'The fallow land of Ajagbusi.' Ajagbusi is in the Odighiri area. This part of Owo land was appropriated by Akure in the 1920s with the connivance of the British Resident at Akure.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ogbagi, the Irekari area of Idoani, Idogun, Afo and Ifira and the Ekamarun area of Ifon and Imoru. For the first time in Owo's history, the city of Owo received war captives from such distant places as Ubiaja, Afuje and Sabongida-Ora. The population of the city ballooned, and new pride and patriotism swept through the citizenry.

Even in this atmosphere, the rivalries between the high chiefs and the Olowo did not cease to pollute the governance of the kingdom. In time, therefore, reaction against the endless political tangles among the rulers reared its head among the non-political elites of the city, especially the wealthier traders. According to the traditions, this reaction first began among the long distance traders to Oyo-ile, Ila and the Niger country, among who were the richest traders in Owo. (Because cam wood, *'osun,'* was a regular part of the export merchandise carried by these traders' caravans, they became popularly known as cam-wood traders). The reaction acquired serious political clout when the traders managed to link up with a few influential chiefs who detested the goings on in the highest ranks of chiefs. A formidable alliance emerged which gave itself the name of 'Otu Bamgbosun,' (literally, 'help me carry cam wood,' with the motto: 'Join with me to lift up our society'), poised for historic change –producing action. Complete power would soon pass into their hands.[16]

This development led to the emergence of Farokun, better known to history as Ajaka, whom Ashara has dubbed, 'Ajaka, the great.'[17] The time for the Otu Bamgbosun to strike came when Ajagbusi-Ekun died in c1760. As the high chiefs went through the process of selecting the Olowo from among many princes, taking heavy bribes from the contestants,

[16] When the 'Otu Bamgbosun,' came to power in Owo, two of their theme songs were: 'Igan ogun wolu, oloyele mu oyele so,' meaning: (1) 'The 'arresting officer' is in town, let the lawless curb his lawlessness.' (2) 'E ba mi wa okun eran, aje wonyi di ewure,' meaning: 'Help me fetch a rope as these witches have become goats.' The wicked were described as witches in pre-colonial Owo.

[17] Members of the Otu Bamgbosun would seize control of Owo affairs in the later part of the 18th century and unfettered power would pass into their hands. Olowo Adedipe Elewu-Okun and his son Orimolade Aghagunghaye manipulated this group but the group eventually destroyed some of their sons

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the Otu Bamigbosun got ready for action and secretly selected the prince named Farokun as their candidate.

The high chiefs selected Adedipe and prepared for the coronation rituals. The rituals included certain rites, which had to be performed by the Olisagho and the Ighare chiefs. Farokun and his supporters waited, unknown to the high chiefs. When the high chiefs arrived at the place of the rituals, Farokun and his supporters, well armed, emerged from the bush and surrounded them. Adedipe managed to escape and flee.[18] Farokun's supporters then compelled the Olisagho to perform the installation rituals on him and then they carried him shoulder high to Ushama where a newly installed king was expected to reside for three months, learning the secrets and the administration of the kingdom, before proceeding to the palace. Farokun rejected the three-month delay. He demanded that he be allowed to sit down three times on Ushama's sacred stool – each time he sat down counting as a month. He sat down three times on the seat and headed for the palace. Nobody dared question the propriety of his actions. Then he chose the cognomen of Ajaka, (literally, 'one who fights about'), and commenced to rule. A new era had dawned.

At his coronation, Ajaka was thirty-six years of age. He had been born at Ikpesi, a village in the Akoko country, where the diviner had told his mother to go and deliver him if he was to survive infancy. At Ikpesi, the herbalist, who helped to deliver him, predicted that the baby boy would one day become a great warrior and a king of Owo, but warned his mother to tell him never to wage war against Ikpesi, or fail to come to the aid of Ikpesi in time of trouble. [19]

[18] It is said that Farokun, on getting to the spot where Adedipe was standing and finding him gone, said that 'Oyi ogun fe kuro lori re,' meaning: 'Adedipe was free of ogun's (dagger,)' ('Ogun'- Yoruba god of steel)
[19] The nurse who took delivery of the baby was instructed to preserve his placenta and umbilical cord.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The most popular traditions in Owo are hostile to Ajaka. He is described as an introverted, brooding character, very unkindly in attitude and looks, totally bereft of human decency, a man who based his trust completely on his magical charms and practiced witchcraft and occultism.[20] He is said to have been completely untrustworthy, as his words could not be relied upon as his words could be twisted to mean anything that suited his fancy. The chiefs believed that since he did not accede to the throne constitutionally, trouble lay ahead. Maybe because of his method of ascension, from the inception of his rule, Ajaka was the object of the chiefs' plots and assassination attempts but all efforts in that direction remained futile.

When Ajaka became Olowo, Oludipe, (born of the same mother with Adedipe), inspired by the dynamism and aggressive style of Ajaka, became a page and served as a sword bearer for the new king.[21]Adedipe, in hiding, continued to claim that Farokun had usurped the throne from him. In consequence, Farokun continually made plans to get rid of Adedipe. Periodically, Ajaka would send messengers to search out Adedipe in order to kill him, if they had the opportunity. To make his plan foolproof, Farokun made Oludipe to swear that he would be loyal to his king and never divulge any information regarding his plans to kill his brother, Adedipe. Oludipe promised on oath to be true to his king, Ajaka, who also prevailed upon him to reveal any little information he heard about his brother and his movements.

Oludipe provided the service of a good and loyal attendant to Ajaka but he also revealed Ajaka's plans and intentions to Adedipe. He never talked directly to his brother but would walk up to the wall where Adedipe was hiding and say something to the effect

[20] A great magician, legends have it that he used his first-born son, an eight-day-old baby, to prepare a charm. The baby was pounded with a mortar and pestle and the ingredients used to prepare the charm, to which he talked continually. Ajaka called it '*Omamano.*' ('The Inner Child'). With the *power* he derived from this charm, he became completely fearless and no one dared to confront him.

[21] In a memo sent to the Resident, Ondo Province in 1946, Olateru Olagbegi made a statement to this effect, claiming that Ajaka was older than his great grandfather, Adedipe, but when Ajaka died, Adedipe became the Olowo because Ajaka had no surviving male child.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

that unless the wall (meaning Adedipe) removed itself from that spot that day, at such and such a time, it would be destroyed. When Adedipe heard what was said to the walls, he knew that they were meant for him and he would depart the area immediately. Oludipe used this ruse and subterfuge at every opportunity to convey Ajaka's plans to his brother Adedipe without getting close to him or talking directly to him.[22]

Ajaka soon became a terror to both his own people and the surrounding settlements. He had an accomplice in the Oliyere Ashamaju [23] and because of his connection with Ajaka, Oliyere Ashamaju too became another terror in the neighborhood of Iyere. With Oliyere Ashamaju's reputation of possessing strong medicine, Ajaka felt secure and fearless. Ajaka's brother, born of the same mother with him, Famaiye, was his chief assistant and armor bearer. Famaiye was not a chief but he enjoyed the largesse of a titled personage.

Ajaka was a career warrior and a restless spirit. The spirit of expansionism and martial ardor that had become imbued in the Owo people since the defeat of the Benin army in the 17th century had led to the emergence of warriors like Ajaka. The dangerous atmosphere that was prevalent in parts of southern Yorubaland during the 18th century, when the Atlantic slave trade began to make its inroad into the area, appears to have prepared the way for him. Although a prince, Ajaka had trained himself as a soldier of fortune, well experienced in brigandage, raiding and pillage. Following his ascension in c1760, he immediately embarked on an expansionist program, which later carried him further a field than any of his predecessors. He continued to prosecute the war in Akoko and subdued towns and villages in the Afenmai areas ('Kukuruku' country), re-captured

[22] It is said that on a set day, to prove his brother's truthfulness, Adedipe left a stump of plantain stem covered with a piece of white linen in a house where he had hidden himself the previous night and made it appear that he was still in the neighborhood. That night, shortly before dawn, it was found that his enemies had massacred the stump.

[23] An Oliyere at Iyere but was not the Ayere, head of the town.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Sabongida-Ora and Ekpoma. He then turned his attention towards the 'north' and captured several towns and villages.[24] Ajaka built a military camp at Ikpesi in Akoko.[25] In c1765, he invaded Ifira, Ibilo, Imaga, Imakenke and Imagongo, (the last three in modern Kogi state) and captured Oka, Upe, Supare, Arigidi, Ikun, Ogbagi, Isua, Erusu, Okeagbe, Akungba, Osoese, Upara, Epinmi, and places in the Kukuruku and Afenmai areas.

Ashara says that on one occasion, on his way to Ikpesi,[26] he crossed over to Ikare and the Ikare people heartily welcomed him to their midst.[27]Ajaka, cherishing the feeling of a great warrior, was delighted. He then received the Ikare people well and to show that he really was their ruler, he received the rods, (atori), which they held and danced with, from them and planted them in a bunch at the Osele market together with an Iroko tree. He then asked them to worship and serve these, known as Esi, as their totems.[28] The Owa-Ale, the ruler of Ikare at the time, sensing that he could use Ajaka's power for his own purpose, told him that there was one village, Upe, near Ikare, whose inhabitants were insubordinate to the ruler of Owo. They had refused to contribute their quota to the tributes meant for the Owo ruler. Immediately, Ajaka directed his army towards Upe, a village whose inhabitants numbered only one hundred and twenty people and within a few hours, he overran the place. Ajaka then cursed the people with his charms and put an

---

[24] Beeley, 'Intelligence Report,' para. 74. Ashara, op. cit., chiefs Oshowe, Elerewe Abraham Ojo Olakunori and Pa Sumanu Arobo, the Olori Ebi of Sashere compound, interviewed on 08/09/84.

[25] It is reported that Ajaka attacked Akoko towns and villages twenty–seven times in his twenty-year reign. Ashara, The History.

[26] Owo traditions say that Ajaka, born at Ikpesi, made the place his headquarters in the Akoko country. He later died there in 1780, when fighting in the Ikpesi-Ifira war. Because of the appreciation the Ikpesi people had for Ajaka, a monument was erected for him at Ikpesi in the form of a rock or mound called *Okuta – Ajaka* (Ajaka's stone), still worshipped at Ikpesi till today.

[27] The Owa-Ale of Ikare, not knowing what to do, asked his people to give Ajaka a rousing welcome with this song: 'Mo ro Olu ma sin, sa pa ta obele, chorus: Mo ro Olu ma sin, sa pa ta obele.' 'I have seen the king I will worship /serve; I have seen the king I will worship/ serve.' The Owa-Ale called Ajaka 'Orun Akoko,' 'eni Akoko nbi omo sin lese oke,' meaning : '(Ajaka) the Lord of Akoko, the one for whose service the Akoko people breed their children on the hillcrest.'

[28] 'Do Esi,' means to plant an ensign. The Olukare, Oba Momoh, in a recent interview, denied this incident but he could not give an account of the origin of the esi or ensign in the middle of the Osele market in Ikare. See Awe, "Owo history from the earliest times, 1977:65

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

interdiction on the place that the population would never exceed one hundred and twenty. Today, Upe is a village of a few inhabitants.

In 1772, Ajaka massacred a combined Akoko army, from forty-two townships in all, sent against him and established a new tribute system over the Akoko towns and villages.[29] On another occasion, during the invasions of Akoko, Ajaka crossed from Ikare to Akunnu and when he prepared to smash the place, the people quickly came out to tell him that they were his subjects and that they would worship and serve him.[30] When Ajaka saw the way they came out to surrender themselves, he felt pity for them and left them unhurt.[31] Then they gave him some presents.

In most of his forays into the Akoko country, Ajaka would destroy villages and take as many captives as he wished while the remaining people were killed on their entry into the towns. In doing this, Ajaka laid the foundation for his reputation as a ferocious warrior and military leader in the minds of the people of the area. He appeared to the people of Akoko as unassailable, because the defenders of these settlements could not make any headway against him.

On the day of Ajaka's return from the battlefront, the city of Owo was always agog with festivity. Women would dance in the streets and thousands of people would come out to welcome him home. He would march at the head of the parade with booty and captives in tow.

Ajaka had attempted to restore the lost dominance of the Olowo and to curb the excesses of the high chiefs. Strongly supported by the Otu Bamgbosun, he achieved

---

[29] Annual tributes from the Akoko settlements included cows, rams, 'egbo,' (bean cakes); yams, fish, cowry currency and casks of palm oil brought to the Olowo's palace during the Igogo and the Ore festivals, Ashara, The History, Beeley, Intelligence Report on Owo.

[30] The story of Akunnu: Once at Owo, a man and a woman were to be sacrificed at the Igogo festival and they both escaped and fled to the Akoko country and sought refuge at a place later known as Akunnu and since then they had gradually increased.

[31] That is why it became a saying in Owo that it was not every day that Ajaka committed atrocities and that there were days he was also merciful.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

much in these matters. Unfortunately, his love of life on the warpath rather than in the palace limited his success. Personally, he was much feared by the high chiefs on account of his perceived occult powers. He, himself, came to believe that he was a supernatural being, impossible for any man to resist. Over time, he became a terror to his chiefs, as he executed any of them found disloyal to him or for any other excuse, at will. At the same time, his endless military victories abroad made him the idol of the masses at home. Increasingly, the chiefs dared not voice their criticisms and misgivings about him but, rather, tended to join with the common people to adulate him. The Otu Bamgbosun, claiming Ajaka himself as their leader, became dominant in everything, to the silent dismay of the high chiefs.

Ajaka's place in Owo's history is very difficult to assess. His enemies see him as an egomaniacal lunatic, addicted to ever seeking his own glory – a brutal and an erratic despot. But most of the common people of Owo saw him, and still see him, as perhaps the strongest ruler of their kingdom ever.[32] It is impossible to deny that he was the Olowo who within a few years advanced Owo's fortunes until Owo became the greatest kingdom in the southeastern forest country of Yorubaland in the late eighteenth century. Even though he did not pay much attention to internal constitutional transformations, it is significant that after him, the chiefs never again overran the Olowos. Though the chiefs did, as in the rest of the Yoruba country, select their king from a pool of contending princes, they, as in the rest of Yorubaland, honored their king and upheld his dignity before the public. After Ajaka, too, the Otu Bamgbosun remained, prospered, and developed into a significant institution in Owo's political life- a sort of patriotic defender of good governance and supporter of the Olowos.

[32] It is not for nothing that Ashara called Farokun, 'Ajaka, the Great.' Ashara, The History.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

When the death of Ajaka was announced in the war front in Ikpesi, Akoko country, in c1780, Adedipe was at his hideout in Iyere. As soon as it was confirmed that Ajaka and his brother, Famaiye, were dead at Ikpesi, Adedipe prepared to return to Owo. On the way to Owo, Adedipe stopped to consult the Ifa oracle at Aribo-Orioghen's place. Chief Aribo told Adedipe that, according to the revelations of the Ifa oracle, Adedipe would definitely become the next Olowo. But for him to have a good reign and for the throne to be established in his line, he had to create a high chieftaincy title for his brother, Oludipe, after he (Adedipe) had been firmly seated on the throne so that the throne could be his inheritance for ever. If Adedipe failed to do that, he would not have long life, peace and prosperity nor would the kingdom be at peace.

During the contest for the vacant stool, it appears that the popular choice of the Owo people was Oludipe, Adedipe's junior brother, born of the same mother, Egesan,[33] a princess from Ikole- Ekiti.[34]It is said that Oludipe was a more popular choice as successor to the throne than Adedipe because of the latter's pride and detachment from the Owo people [35]and also because of the fact that Oludipe was the braver of the two as he stayed in Owo and remained very close to Ajaka during the years of the latter's turbulent reign. Owo traditions say that Oludipe voluntarily gave his brother Adedipe the opportunity to rule.[36]In an interview in 1986, Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin, the former Governor of Ondo State, told this writer that in c1781, following his installation as Olowo, Adedipe

[33] Because these two families came from the same source, it became a saying in Owo that 'Egesan yi Ogho ka,' meaning: 'Egesan has spread around Owo,' when Oludipe became the Ojomo. With Adedipe as Olowo and Oludipe as Ojomo, the two brothers simply owned and ruled Owo kingdom.

[34] See a brief history contained in a protest note sent by the Ijebu people to the Resident, Ondo Province, 1949. The writer tried to show that Oludipe did Adedipe a favor in c1780 rather than the other way around but the offspring of Adedipe have been repaying the Ojomo family with disfavor ever since.

[35] He made a flat piece of wood which he stretched out for people to grab when greeting them, instead of stretching out his own hand for them to touch. He said that he feared contamination.

[36] Ashara, The History, Oshowe and Elerewe Ojo, all confirm this. Ashara says that Oludipe was, in fact, nominated but he declined the offer for his elder brother, Adedipe. This is, however, contradicted by another source. NAI: petition dated 12/23/49 from the Olowo Olateru Olagbegi and Chiefs to the Chief Commissioner and the Governor, Lagos, p. 9, para. iv, which says that Oludipe had not the slightest chance of becoming Olowo. This petition says that Oludipe could not have been considered if Adedipe Elewu-okun had had no male child because Oludipe had more senior brothers, one of whom was Ajinmekun.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

asked his brother Oludipe what he wanted him (Adedipe, the king) to do for him (Oludipe) that would make him happy. In response, Oludipe requested that his brother, Adedipe, give him his own kingdom in the Akoko country because Owo was in control of those settlements in the 18th century.[37]According to Ajasin, Oludipe had wanted to establish a kingdom in the fertile confluence of the Osse and Oyinma rivers in the Irekari area. His reasoning was that the land was large and it was well watered by the Osse and Oyinma rivers and so he had planned to establish his own small kingdom in the confluence of the two rivers. But Olowo Adedipe refused to grant this request because of the incessant raids of the area by the Nupe. In lieu of that, Adedipe sent people to the Osse river to collect the sand, the water, and the fishes in the river and after these were brought to Owo, Adedipe directed that they be dumped in a small stream in the outskirts of Ijebu village near river Obukele and the Olowo then renamed the stream, 'Osse' and he built a palace on the nearest hill in the area. Adedipe then made an offer of a chieftaincy title to Oludipe. Ajasin said that Adedipe did all that to avert the need for him to have to go to the aid of Oludipe in case the Nupe attacked him in a new kingdom in the Akoko country. Adedipe then consulted members of the Inner Council chiefs about his intention to confer a chieftaincy title on Oludipe. [38] After the chiefs had agreed to his plan, he created the Ojomo chieftaincy title.[39]

---

[37] Chief Ajasin would know some of the details of this story because his mother was a princess, of the household of chief Ojomo. Date of interview, 06/02/86.

[38] On the day the title was to be offered to Oludipe, as usual, he was away at Odo Idimenpen in the lower part of Ijebu area. Hence the saying: 'Oludipe ko san owo oye, ko rin irin oye, ni gba to pada dele lati Odo Idimenpen, o ba oye nla ni ile,' meaning: 'Oludipe neither paid the fees nor lobbied the chiefs for a title but he came home from Odo Idimenpen to find that the Olowo had left a high chieftaincy title for him.' Chief Asolo Otegbeye, interview 08/19/85.

[39] One version of Owo traditions says that Adedipe had to purchase a title, Ojomojama, from the Ighare chiefs of Iloro Quarter. An Ighare, Ojomojama title had been left in abeyance since the death of the last incumbent. Another version says that the title was derived from Benin; the Ezomo title is said to have been adapted for this purpose. The Ezomo presides over Uzebu area in Benin and the new Ojomo of Owo presides over Ujebu or Ijebu, both settlements being places occupied by strangers or people in transit in Benin and Owo respectively.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Oludipe first dwelt at Ododasa, near present day Oludasa Street in Igboroko quarter as his palace was being readied at Oke- Ijebu. The palace at Ijebu, after its completion, had as many Ughas or courtyards as those of the Olowo's palace at Oke Owo. Adedipe then decided to enhance the status of this new chieftaincy title to make it unique in the annals of Owo history. In c1782, when Adedipe gave Ijebu to the Ojomo Oludipe, Ijebu was a small outlying settlement in the eastern part of Owo with people of various backgrounds living there. In addition, Adedipe appended some accoutrements to the Ojomo title: ten wives, two hundred slaves, both male and female, a palace and a crown.[40]

Ijebu quarter thus became the fifth and last quarter to be created in Owo. In addition, the Ariyo Ogwasoyen was created and the incumbent accompanied Oludipe to Ijebu quarter. Oludipe was authorized to initiate his own chiefs, 'Edibo Ojomo' as those of the other village heads. It is not clear if these titles were equal or subordinate in status to the Edibo Olowo chiefs.[41]

The creation of the Ojomo title by Olowo Adedipe was not a unique or an unprecedented act in the annals of Owo history. Over the centuries, the Olowos had established the tradition of creating chieftaincies. However, the case of the Ojomo title was unique among the high chiefs of Owo. The Ojomo was to wear a 'crown,' almost similar in appearance to that of the Olowo. A separate Ijebu quarter was created for him outside the walls of the existing four quarters of Iloro, Igboroko, Ehin-Ogbe and Isaipen. In his new quarter, the Ojomo had a separate market and a palace. In addition, he had more autonomy in the government of his quarter than was granted to the existing quarter heads. He could inflict capital punishment and grant reprieve to any condemned offender.

[40] The crown was an Ajaghere or orikogbofo, a coronet, made of coarse red beads 'iyun' instead of the fine coral beads 'akun' with which the Olowo's crowns are made. While the Olowo had 'Irere okin' (the feather of a certain rare bird but not an egret), the Ojomo had 'Irere Olokose or ilebe', a kind of a lesser bird. Albeit, it's a crown. The Ojomo is an 'Oloja,' owner of a market, because the Olowo also established a market in his name.

[41] Ashara suggests that the Edibo Ojomo chiefs were of lesser status.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Being a prince by birth, the Ojomo's position was patently superior to the positions of the other chiefs.[42]

In all of this, Adedipe's intention was to harness Oludipe's popularity for the support of his own government. For about twenty years, the arrangement worked wonderfully well. There was friendship and collaboration between the Olowo and his chiefs on the one hand and the Ojomo and the Edibo Ojomo chiefs on the other. There was cooperation, harmony and consensus in the decision-making process relating to Owo affairs. Both the Olowo and the Ojomo and their retinues celebrated the Igogo and the Ore festivals together. During the Igogo festival, a day was set aside for the Ojomo to lead the other Owo chiefs to the Olowo's palace to congratulate him and make merry with him. The following day, the Olowo would invite the Ighare chiefs of Iloro quarter to go with him to Oke- Ijebu to pay a brief visit to the palace of his brother, the Ojomo. The Edibo Olowo chiefs, (i.e. the members of the Olowo's Inner Council) would also go with the Olowo on this visit.[43]

The two brothers, Adedipe and Oludipe, the Olowo and the Ojomo respectively, ruled the kingdom of Owo and together they talked and acted in tandem. Whatever the Olowo said was what was acceptable to the Ojomo and vice versa. As long as they cooperated with each other and remained friendly as brothers, the chiefs of either side remained in the background. Even the Ighare chiefs could not dissociate these two brothers. As a result of the closeness of the two most powerful rulers of the Owo kingdom before the end of the 18th century, the chiefs appear to have lost the power they had wielded during the reign of Otutubiosun, despite the fact that Adedipe was another peaceful ruler.

---

[42] NAI: Owo Div. 1/1, File 601, item 16 see also file # 4, vol. III.

[43] In the 18th century and the early part of the 19th century when relations between the Olowo and the Ojomo was good, this visit usually took a whole day and it marked the highest point of the Igogo festival but became a perfunctory obligation later when the going was no longer good.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The general populace of Owo appears to have celebrated joyfully as the Olowo Adedipe created for his brother Oludipe the position of Ojomo, loaded with unusual honors and powers. However, most thoughtful citizens viewed the king's action as a seriously unwise step, a potential threat to the future stability of the kingdom. In fact, though not in name, Adedipe had made his brother a second king in the realm. Similar misgivings were aroused later by Adedipe's mulling of the conferment of the title of Idaniken on one of his sons. Idaniken was a Benin title of the heir apparent to the Benin throne, and the Owo monarchy had tried to adopt this practice of an heir-apparent during the earlier reigns of Ogeja and Alamunren successfully but at other times with unpleasant consequences for the Olowo. Even in the close circle of Adedipe's own family, trouble brewed over this matter, and Adedipe had to appease his other sons by conferring on twenty-two of them, hurriedly created titles and honors. [44] In short, then, steps taken by Adedipe to construct bulwarks in support of his throne only ended in weakening his acceptability in his kingdom.

A naturally fearful and suspicious person, Adedipe appears to be forever haunted by phantoms of non-existent enemies. Fortunately for him, he was ruling at a time that deserves to be regarded as Owo's golden age. There were no wars for years, and no threats from Benin or any other source. Owo experienced peace and plenty. Before c1818, Adedipe did not have to fight any wars and there was no rebellion among the subject towns. Because Owo was at peace with her neighbors, many neighboring rulers sent gifts to the Olowo and gave their daughters as wives to him.

Adedipe built a new wall round the Afin and started a new project to expand the 'Yara' beyond the ones built in the seventeenth century. This was as a result of the new

[44] These included Aralepo, Ekongba, Oludasa, (Omakogbe), Ojigbo, Oludaiye, Owabumaiye, Owagboriaye, Adafin Ewu, Adafin Ajibuwa, Adafin Ajogbo, Adanigbo Akarakiri, Osunla, Modongho, Ajegunma (Egbelogho), Asuada, Oliyere, Atiba, etc. They numbered twenty-two in all.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

developments in the western parts of the Yoruba country at the turn of the 19th century. The decline of the Oyo Empire and the collapse of Oyo-Ile in the first years of the century led to a series of wars in the western parts of Yorubaland and filled the whole country with rumors of wars. Soon, the conflicts between the successor states of the Old Oyo Empire – Ibadan, Ijaye, Ilorin, and new Oyo- would bring wars into the eastern parts of Yorubaland. Adedipe's new walls around the palace and his extensions of the 'Yara' system were undertaken to prepare Owo to defend itself in the light of these approaching perils.

Owo traditions date the construction of the 'Yara' extensions to the 1820s, shortly before the break–up of the city of Oyo-Ile.[45] In general, except in the fields of trade and culture, Owo had, before these times, no apparent political involvement with the western parts of Yorubaland. Politically, Owo's main contacts had been with the Benin kingdom and the smaller kingdoms of eastern Yorubaland. Under the Olowo Adedipe, that was to change dramatically.

Sometime in about c1818, Owo suddenly received from Benin a request for Benin forces to pass through Owo to Akure- in what was destined to be the last Benin invasion of Eastern Yorubaland. Olowo the Owo authorities denied the request. The Benin then had to find another route through Ondo and Alade near Idanre to Akure. After running to hide in the Ekiti country, the Deji of Akure, Osupa, was captured in Ise-Ekiti, having been surrendered to the Benin by the citizens of the town. After beheading the Deji, his son was taken captive and put in chains on his way to Benin City.[46] After subjugating Akure, sections of the Benin army made some successful incursions into the Ekiti

[45] Not Ago d'Oyo of our times.

[46] Akindoju and Oladunjoye, The History of Idanre, 1962: 15. Egharevba gives some details of the Benin punitive expedition of c1818 in his A Short History of Benin, 1960: 35. It is said that the Deji of Akure, an Oba under the suzerainty of Benin, had won a beaded crown and fabricated a royal sword, things forbidden to him as an underling to Benin and that some Benin residents at Akure were maltreated by Akure people. Akintoye, Revolution and Power Politics, chapter III.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

country.[47] On their way back, the Benin armies attacked Owo at Ute.[48] That Owo was able to repulse such a powerful Benin force attests to the fact that Owo was still a military power at that point. .

It was perhaps during the time of Adedipe that Owo was able to exercise the most effective control over her subject states in Akoko, southern Ekiti and Afenmai and Iyagba areas. There appears to be no mention of any recalcitrant Akoko towns and villages during this period. The subject states appeared to be ready to pay their tributes promptly and regularly and acknowledged the suzerainty of Owo over them. [49] Owo traditions say that labor from these places happily contributed to Adedipe's 'Yara' works. [50]

In 1945, Hayley, the acting District Officer for Owo Division, wrote in a memo that '...about 100 years ago, Olowo Elewuokun ruled.' A certain Adedapo Orimolade in a petition dated 20/08/45 wrote the following about Olowo Elewu-Okun: 'Ashaparaogun, popularly known as Elewuokun, was the ruler who had the strongest inclination to imitate the Oba of Benin. It was he who introduced the superfluous beaded dresses and first owned regalia made of beads; hence he was styled Elewuokun, (meaning, the owner of beaded regalia). When he grew fairly old and his power was at its peak, he appointed his son Orimolade as Idaniken (Benin title reserved only for first son of the oba).' [51]

The nineteenth century started with the Owo kingdom developing a cleavage and the two most powerful lineages of the kingdom becoming estranged. As a result of the machinations of the high chiefs, the Olowo and the Ojomo families started to view each

---

[47] Akintoye, 'The Northeastern Yoruba Districts and the Benin Kingdom,' JHSN, vol. 4, No. 4. June, 1969, p. 552

[48] Ashara, The History, Chief Adafin Fayemiwo, Elerewe.

[49] Information from the Alafo of Afo, Akoko, who told Mr. Awe in 1977 that each village or town had specific duties to perform while the trench or 'Yara' was being dug and that it was the duty of Afo to carry the soil dug out from the trench while other groups did the digging and the removal of soil, etc. Ashara says that a special digging iron implement called *'aghen'* two pieces of iron blades hinged together was used as a device to dig and carry a large quantity of soil at once.

[50] Ibid

[51] NAI: Owo Division, 1/I file 679:7

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

other with suspicion and competition. Thus, as time went on, the existence of the Ojomo living as a king in Ijebu quarter became a factor that did not serve the interest of the monarchy well. Ojomo Oludipe himself did not help matters, as he left no one in doubt that he considered himself both the absolute ruler of his quarter, Ijebu, a fiefdom and by virtue of his crown, a co-ruler of the whole kingdom of Owo. He had taken vigorous steps to swell his quarter with captives and settlers from Akungba, Afo, Ifira and Ikare and Akure. Among the settlers he had created his own class of chiefs. All that may have worked to antagonize the Olowo but Adedipe appears not to have shown any resentment. The picture of the Ojomo, swaggering under his 'crown' with a 'scepter' and requiring that all the other members of the Inner Council kneel down to greet him [52]in the presence of the Olowo made it appear as if the Ojomo was rivaling the king and that also alienated a number of the high chiefs. A few of the chiefs were, of course, jealous of the position of the Ojomo and many of them said that Oludipe should have been made an ordinary chief.

By the first decade of the 19th century, it became apparent that some strains had started to creep into the relationship between the Olowo Adedipe and his brother, Oludipe, the Ojomo. Many factors gave some fillip to the growing tensions between the two brothers. Earlier, in c1796, a young woman named Alabile was betrothed to Olowo Adedipe. Later that year, Alabile gave birth to a son named Orimolade. The day following the birth of the child, one of Adedipe's sons, chief Elegba, came to the palace to announce that he had just killed an elephant and he wanted to offer his father the king, the tusks. As tradition demanded, he had to perform the rituals connected with this feat, the Uja, at the

[52] Chief Ojomo Oludipe is said to have demanded and received the obeisance of all chiefs including members of the Ugbema Aleli, the Inner Council. NAI: Owo Div. 1/1, File 601, item 16 and passim. Beeley said in 1934 that 'although in common with the other Owo chiefs, the Ojomo must kneel down to salute the Olowo (Owa), it is customary for the other chiefs (even those senior in rank to the Ojomo) as a matter of courtesy in recognition of the fact that the Owa (sic) has crowned the Ojomo, to kneel to salute him.' Beeley, 'Intelligence Report,' p. 10, para. 44

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ugha Edunma. While he was still doing that, his father told him to go into the inner recesses of the palace to congratulate Alabile and wish her baby, the newborn king, well. The Elegba had become an elephant killer, 'ode *aperin,'* (elephant hunter), who must not kneel down to salute anybody except the king but he had to obey his father. After leaving the palace, chief Elegba went to Oke-Ijebu to complain to the Ojomo about his ill treatment in the palace at Oke–Owo. After narrating his experience to the Ojomo, the latter commiserated with him but also added that he too had the same experience the previous day when Alabile was about to give birth to the baby. The Ojomo added that, in fact, after consulting the Ifa oracle regarding this child, he was told that the child would not let him sleep at Owo, meaning that the child would not let him die at home. This means that when the boy grew up, he would expel the Ojomo from Owo. From that point on, the Elegba and the Ojomo started to look for ways to get rid of the baby.

It was alleged that chief Ojomo attempted to poison the young Orimolade, on one occasion. Although Adedipe did not confront his brother about this incident, relations between the two brothers started to deteriorate rapidly henceforth. However, they still continued to patch things up and appeared as if nothing untoward was going on. But the episode had created a deep distrust and a chasm between the two power centers in Owo kingdom.

In 1828, Olowo Adedipe created the Idaniken title[53] and conferred it on Orimolade, one of his youngest sons, and placed him at the Iselu sub-quarter. Misgivings were aroused by Adedipe's conferment of the title of Idaniken on one of his sons. Almost immediately after, the Ojomo decided to create his own Ojomoken, heir-apparent to the Ojomo and placed him at the Ijomoken subquarter in the Ijebu quarter. Some of the chiefs

[53] cf. the Edai n'iken in Benin. The Idaniken in Owo lived at Uselu subquarter in Igboroko quarter

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

then started to complain that they were being forced to serve four kings at the same time, instead of one.[54]

From that point on, the relationship between the Olowo and the Ojomo began to deteriorate rapidly to the point that the Olowo is said to have started to think that the Ojomo might have had an ulterior motive in all his dealings with him. At that point, the chiefs became involved in the struggle for mastery in the kingdom and they started to point to occasions of competition between the Ojomo and his children, on the one hand and the Olowo and his children, on the other. Henceforth, every move of the Ojomo was seen as calculated and geared towards the eventual takeover of the kingdom.

The Olowo according to tradition celebrated the Ore festival, a sort of carnival in which the king displayed the glory of his kingdom in his stately appearance and dance to the beat of the oluserepe drums along with all the most important chiefs of the realm. This was one occasion when it was apparent that the Olowo was the most important chieftain in the kingdom. In imitation of the Olowo, the Ojomo, went ahead and inaugurated his own annual festival he named 'Alaputin.' As time went by, this ceremony would come to rival the Ore festival celebrated in Oke-Owo. As if that was not enough, the Ojomo started to bring out the '*Gudugbe*' [55] as the Olowo and the Owo people brought out the '*Ogho,*' a sacred symbol of the Owo people, which was used to ward off pestilence and the outbreak of diseases.

By the end of the first decade of the 19th century, the relationship between the Olowo and the Ojomo had reached its nadir point. As a result, all the pent up grievances

[54] The Olowo Adedipe Elewu-okun, his son, Idaniken Orimolade, Ojomo Oludipe and his son, Ojomoken (Odudu) Ajigbotaiye. All these personages were acting as kings in the kingdom.

[55] The '*Gudugbe*' was the god of the hills worshipped by the Ikare (Akoko) people. The Owo people worshipped the *Ogho* and on such occasions non-initiates into the cult and strangers had to stay home. Hence the period of seven days was called 'asemo ile' meaning: 'confinement or curfew period.' The Ijebu people were all total strangers and so that period was always a difficult period for them as they had to remain indoors and that made them feel left out. As a result they devised the *Gudugbe* thing for their own area and paraded their streets with it, declaring their own curfew time to non-Ijebu people and so on.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

harbored by the high chiefs started to come out and the resentment generated by the new chieftaincy title of Ojomo started to come into the open. One particular incident gave the chiefs the opportunities they had been waiting for. It was during the period for the preparation for the annual Ore festival.

Sometime in 1827, an itinerant cloth seller from Benin brought a red flannel to Owo for sale. When he offered the piece to the Olowo and the Idaniken, (as the latter had taken over the administration of the kingdom by that time because the king, Adedipe, had become senile and too old to perform some of the functions of the Olowo), the Idaniken rejected the piece of cloth. The Idaniken, who was to use the piece to robe on the occasion of the Ore, insisted that if the piece would not satisfy the needs of himself and the Ojomoken, he would not buy it. As the Idaniken had taken over the functions of the Olowo so also had the Ojomoken taken over the functions of the Ojomo at Ijebu, as Oludipe too was advanced in age. (It is presumed that the Idaniken did not want to appear superior to the Ojomoken or upstage him in any way but we are not sure of this). On leaving the palace at Oke–Owo, the cloth seller headed for Oke-Ijebu. Who else would have had money enough to buy such a piece of cloth in Owo kingdom in those days except the Ojomo? When the cloth was offered to the authorities at Ijebu, the latter quickly bought and kept the cloth instead of finding out if the cloth had been offered to the authorities at Oke-Owo and their reaction there and if the piece would satisfy the needs of both the Idaniken and the Ojomoken.

On the day of Ore, the Ojomoken wore the cloth that was earlier rejected at Oke-Owo. As he was coming from Ijebu at the head of his retinue, people started to alert the Idaniken of the Ojomoken's indescribable attire. Eventually, the Ojomoken arrived at the palace at Oke-Owo with his retinue and immediately, the Idaniken confronted him about the cloth and the latter was then able to confirm that it was the same cloth that he had

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

earlier rejected at Oke-Owo. Immediately, the Ore ceremonies were cancelled for that year and the Ojomoken was sent home in disgrace. A few hours later, the Idaniken sent the Ojomoken an ultimatum to either vacate the Ojomo's palace at Oke-Ijebu or face an attack. The Idaniken threatened to burn down Ojomo's palace. To avert such a calamity, the Ojomo, at first, pleaded with his brother Adedipe to stop his son from carrying out his threat. But Adedipe said that the matter was out of his hands. The Ojomo then tried to invoke the blood relationship between him and the Olowo Adedipe and the help he had rendered during the years Adedipe was struggling to get to the throne, how he had saved Adedipe from the hands of Farokun Ajaka and how he had later conceded the throne to him. But all of that had been invoked in the past and the Owo authorities appeared not to be interested in rehashing that again and again. Even when Adedipe appeared to relent and wanted to forgive his brother and his son the Ojomoken, the high chiefs, the Idaniken, (who was then emerging as the strongman of Owo), would threaten his feeble father and totally reject any compromise and appeared opposed to any amicable settlement and reconciliation.

At last, when his entreaties would not move the authorities at Oke-Owo, Oludipe and his son, the Ojomoken, and the entire Ojomo clan decided to leave Owo temporarily. They thought that, maybe, after things had cooled down, they would be able to return home. They left Owo that night for an unknown destination and continued to move towards the northern part of the kingdom that was not occupied. At every stop, Oludipe would send some messengers to the Olowo to tell him that he had reached so and so spot and could he stop there and return home? The reply would be that he should continue to move on, as that spot was still part of Owo land. Eventually, he crossed into the territory of the Ekiti country and Akoko country and stopped and did not send any messages to his brother. The spot where he stopped was in Igbo Usugwe, (Usugwe forest), in the Akoko/

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ekiti border area, twelve miles north of Owo city and he decided to settle there. Ojomo Oludipe, the Ojomoken and two other Ojomos, installed in exile, died at Igbo Usugwe.[56] The Ojomo family would remain in exile at Usugwe for the next forty–five years.[57]

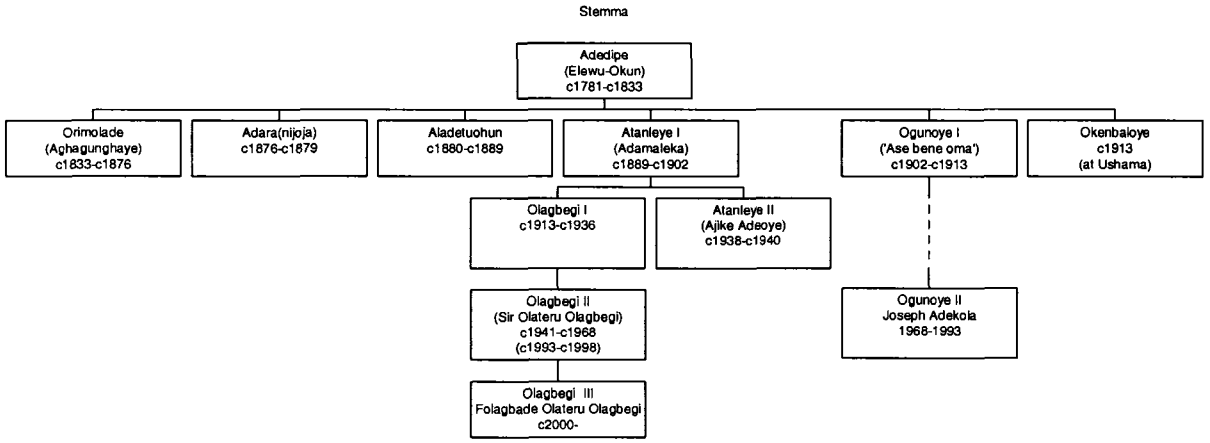
Adedipe geared his efforts towards upholding and enhancing the authority and dignity of the king against any pretensions by the chiefs of his Inner Council. It appears that he succeeded considerably in this effort. In this, he owed a lot to the heritage of Ajaka, who had freed the king from the excessive dominance of the high chiefs and rallied the masses to the support of the king. Throughout Adedipe's reign, even though he lacked the personal awesomeness and military successes of Ajaka, the chiefs cooperated with him dutifully. In fact, at his death they carried the cooperation to the point of selecting his sons to accede to the throne directly after him. For this reason, Owo traditions have continued to assert that Adedipe established a new dynasty over Owo. Although the system of selection of a new king by the chiefs has continued, it is only princes of Adedipe's direct line that have been selected since the 1830s until today.

[56] The Ojomos: Oludipe, Ojomoken-(Odudu) Ajigbotaiye, Agunloye, (Aruliwo), Oyigun, (Oligbogi) Amaka, and his son, Mr. S. K. Amaka, (not recognized under colonial rule), Ademola (German), Aruliwo 11, John Eleduma, Agunloye 11, Kofo Oladoyinbo, Aruliwo 111.

[57] In c1871, Olowo Aghagunghaye Orimolade attacked Agunloye at Usugwe and the latter ran to Isho. Agunloye had made Usugwe the headquarters for marauders pillaging Owo villages and trading caravans. Orimolade then pursued him to Isho, insisting that Agunloye leave Owo soil. Agunloye then ran to Akure. In 1875, Orimolade died and in 1876, having spent five years in Akure, Agunloye was allowed to return to Owo. See Beeley, Para 70.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

See the stemma below:



Thus, the problems inherent in the grafting of the Benin monarchical system onto the Owo monarchical system became very obvious in the years following the reign of Oshogboye. Kings who did not have his ability or his charisma tried to rule like him – either by appointing strong persons to new chieftaincy titles to support their kingship or by embarking on careers of warfare. These tended to appear successful for some time but the chiefs, inheritors of the Yoruba system out of respect for groups in the society through their leaders who were chiefs, could never give up the tradition. Even the new cadre of Inner Council chiefs created by the kings always turned around to try and exercise the independent authority that a Yoruba chief was, by tradition, supposed to exercise in the context of a limited monarchy. The suppression of the oldest and most experienced group of title holders, the Ighare chiefs, robbed the kingdom of the ethos essential for the kingdom's dignified governance. A certain decline in the quality of chiefly nobility imported poor standards into the execution of near sacred state duties such as the selection of new kings. The climax to centuries of arbitrary royal behavior came when one Olowo established the unduly exalted position of Ojomo for his brother, thereby creating a sort of second king for the Owo kingdom. Even before the end of the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

life of the first holder of the Ojomo title, the incalculable harm inherent in the title for the stability of the Owo kingdom and its unusual accoutrements began to hit the Owo kingdom. The institutional instabilities and conflicts have continued to hang over Owo's political life till our times. This is clearly shown in the events of the last century in Owo under British rule and independent Nigeria. But before we get to that, the next chapter will discuss the history of Owo in the 19th century as the events of that century provides a basis for a better understanding of the events of the recent past.

This period in the history of Owo witnessed important changes in the political and social spheres. But these changes had some destabilizing effects on the economy and the governance of the Owo kingdom. The effects of these changes linger till today. The events of this period illustrate changes and continuities in the history of Owo as this was the first big break from the past – a big break between the Olowo and his larger constituency. The establishment of the Ojomo title was the culmination of the search for a stabilizing factor by successive Olowos up to this point. The Ojomo's position was meant to augment the powers of the Olowo but it turned out to be an albatross and within a few years, the first title holder, Ojomo Oludipe, was sent into exile and the title left in abeyance. Although a change, it also ushered in another period of continuity in the history of Owo, a period of almost fifty years without the Ojomo.

This period also showed that the Owo kingdom had become a viable political economy; it shows that the kingdom had become somewhat prosperous. Olowo Adedipe who reigned towards the end of the period is depicted in the sources as the most successful Olowo, having the means to build lofty Ughas (castles) within the palace, constructed a second 'Yara' (moat) to enclose a wider area of Owo as the town had expanded far beyond the size of Owo during the Oshogboye era. He was also able to create chieftaincy titles for his many sons and above all he had the means to imitate the Oba of Benin in

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

royal chiefly regalia such as in his construction of flowing gowns completely made of beads, ivory and gold. This was the golden age of the Owo kingdom in which the people and their rulers lived in castles, *Apapara*, and patronized the arts. This was a gilded age in the history of Owo. Additionally, Owo was able to contend with Benin and relate to the latter on an equal basis. There were no wars during this period as Owo appeared militarily formidable and many of the marauding bands of attackers restrained themselves from invading Owo. Owo through tact and diplomatic relations with her neighbors had established her own pax both at home and in her neighborhood.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Owo in the 19th century

From the foregoing, then, we can see that after the Owo kingdom had asserted its independence in the early years of the 17th century, it grew into a rich and powerful kingdom and even established a little empire of its own encompassing the Akoko, southern Ekiti (Emure, Ise, Omuo, Irun and Ogbagi) and the Iyagba districts to the north.

In the course of the 19th century, however, a long series of wars engulfed Yorubaland of which the Owo kingdom was an important part. Practically all provinces of Yorubaland got involved in these wars which did not end until the British intervened to broker a peace in the 1890s.

Historians have, in recent decades, been trying to understand the cause of these wars. The consensus now seems to be that the main cause was the collapse of the Oyo Empire early in the 19th century.[1] From the last years of the 16th century, the Oyo kingdom of northwest Yorubaland had grown so powerful as to conquer a large territory stretching from the River Niger in the north to the Atlantic Ocean in the south, consisting of northern and western Yoruba sub-groups, as well as non-Yoruba peoples – Nupes, (Bida) Bariba (Borgu) and the Adja.[2] For most of the 17th century and the 18th century, the influence of the Oyo Empire had generally sustained peace in Yorubaland. First, the area of Yorubaland ruled by the empire was large – and there was good and orderly

[1] Ajayi, J.F.A., and Robert S. Smith, Yoruba Warfare in the 19th Century, Cambridge, 1964; Akinjogbin, I.A. 'The Prelude to the Yoruba Civil Wars of the Nineteenth Century,' Odu, (2nd series), vol. 1, # 2, 1965: 24-46; 'A Chronology of Yoruba History, 1789-1840,' Odu, (2nd series), vol. 2, # 2, 1966: 81-111; 'The Oyo Empire in the Eighteenth Century- A Reassessment,' JHSN, vol. 3, # 3, 1966: 449-60.

[2] Akinjogbin, I. A., 'The Oyo Empire in the Eighteenth Century- A Reassessment,' JHSN, vol. 3, # 3, 1966: 449-60; Dahomey and its Neighbors, 1708-1818, Thomas Hutchinson, 1969; 'The Expansion of Oyo and the Rise of Dahomey, 1600-1800,' in J.F. Ade Ajayi and M. Crowder, (eds.), History of West Africa, vol. 1, (2nd edition) London, 1976: 373-412

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

government there. Secondly, the rulers of Oyo used their influence to support peace in most of the rest of Yorubaland by intervening, from time to time, in problems between Yoruba kingdoms. But suddenly, in the first years of the 19th century, the Oyo Empire succumbed to some long-standing internal problems and collapsed. The collapse was so total that the capital city of the Oyo Empire, Oyo-Ile, was abandoned.

These developments immediately affected the rest of Yorubaland. First, large numbers of Oyo people fled south into the rest of Yorubaland, and their new towns there clashed with one another. Second, old disputes among Yoruba kingdoms flared into wars- for example, Owu versus Ife and Ijebu. Third, Yoruba neighbors took advantage to invade Yorubaland - the Fulani, Nupe, Dahomey, invaded various parts of Yorubaland.

In the confusion of the collapse of Oyo, a Fulani emirate was established in the Oyo town of Ilorin to the north.[3] From Ilorin, a series of Jihadist invasions was launched into Yorubaland. From the northeast, the Nupe expanded their traditional raids of northeastern Yorubaland,[4] penetrating to the Akoko country, which was regarded by Owo as part of its domain.

In the 1850s, Ilorin had attacked the Ekiti and Akoko states and occupied the area. Later, in the 1860s, Ibadan came and flushed out the Ilorin and then proceeded to conquer and establish control over these kingdoms.[5] A larger stream of Yoruba people than ever before, as war captives, found their way into the Atlantic Slave Trade through the Dahomey ports, the Benin ports and Lagos. In general, the eastern Yoruba states

[3] A Fulani jihadist movement had swept through Hausaland beyond the River Niger in the north and conquered the old Hausa kingdoms, for example, Gobir and Zazzau or Zaria and replaced them with Fulani–ruled emirates. A local Fulani resident at Ilorin, taking advantage of the political problems of the Oyo empire, had by the 1820s, established an emirate at Ilorin. J.F. Ade Ajayi, 'The Aftermath of the fall of Oyo, ' in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, (eds.) History of West Africa, Vol. 2, Longman, 1976: 129-166. Adeleye, R. A., Diplomacy and and Power in Northern Nigeria, Longman, 1976

[4] Mason, M., 'The Jihad in the South: an outline of the 19th century Nupe Hegemony in Northeastern Yorubaland and Afenmai,' JHSN, # V, No. 2, 1970.

[5] On the events of the Yoruba country from the early part of the 19th century, see S. Johnson, History of the Yorubas; R. S. Smith and J.F.A. Ajayi, Yoruba Warfare in the 19th Century, 1964; IA Akinjogbin, Dahomey and her Neighbors, Law, Robin, The Oyo Empire, 1991.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

principally the Ijesha, Ekiti, Akoko, Owo and Ondo came to play increasingly bigger roles in the affairs of the Yoruba country. The aftermath of the fall of the Oyo Empire had thus resulted in disorder in Yorubaland. Compounding this was the overriding, empire-building, ambition of the new state of Ibadan.[6]

Earlier in c1833 in Owo, Orimolade, who had been made an Idaniken seventeen years earlier in c1816, succeeded his father, Adedipe, without any opposition. He immediately assumed the throne name of Aghagunghaye.[7] Although he ascended the throne without any opposition, Orimolade was, however, not popular among the generality of Owo people. For one thing, his reigning directly after his father without a contest among eligible princes was an outrage on the traditional unwritten constitution of Owo. There was, therefore, little likelihood that all the people would like him. But he also further alienated the people by his arrogance, wickedness and debauchery.[8] Moreover, many people held him responsible for the rift which had developed between his father, Adedipe, and his uncle, Oludipe, the Ojomo, and never forgave him.[9] Thus, even before he became Olowo, he had antagonized many people in Owo, particularly the

---

[6] Akintoye says that Ibadan's maladministration in these areas was personified by the *ajeles* (representatives) appointed by the Ibadan authorities to administer the eastern Yoruba territories on behalf of Ibadan. See Akintoye, Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1971, chapter 111; Awe, Bolanle, 'The Ajele System: a study of Ibadan Imperialism in the 19th century,' JHSN, 3, 2, 1964:47-60.

[7] One of the youngest sons of Adedipe, Orimolade, the son of Ameri Alabile, is said to have been marked for this position since his birth. Orimolade was the favorite of his father and is said to have had a mark of king- an impression of a crown, on his forehead when he was born. For this see, NAI: Owo Div. 1/1 files 679, p. 45-67. In a petition written by the 'Sons and Daughters of Olowo Ogunoye,' against a proposal to institutionalize the title of Idaniken, to the Resident, Ondo Province, Akure, dated December 24, 1944, we read, inter alia, '.... Orimolade, Aghagunghaye, the most wonderfully, unusually created personage, was born with emblem of crown on his head....' (sic). Altogether, Orimolade Aghagunghaye ruled Owo kingdom for sixty years: 17 years as Idaniken and 43 years as Olowo.

[8] Personal communication: chiefs Ashara, Oshowe, Adafin Fayemiwo, Adafin Daramola, the Akowa of Iloro quarter, etc. Orimolade is said to have been one of the most oppressive Olowos. For example, it is said that he killed his mother following the death of his sister, Abiola. A thick piece of cloth used by women to hang their child on their back, '*igbadi,*' was tied around the neck of Ameri Alabile. This was twisted several times with a piece of stick and she was choked. 'Nwon ro ni ke ke,' meaning: 'To choke to death.' This was to prevent her from witnessing the death of her only remaining child, Orimolade, in case he too died before she died naturally. It is said that Orimolade was resposibile for more dastardly acts.

[9] Beeley, 'Intelligence Report,' para 49.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Edibo Olowo chiefs. Many high chiefs and other influential citizens of Owo, among who was Ariyo, one of the palace chiefs, despised him and openly opposed his rule.[10]

Following his ascension, Orimolade created the title of Owadogbon [11] and had the title conferred on one of his closest brothers, Akombo, [12]and elevated him to the ranks of the Edibo Olowo (senior chiefs). In fact, the Owadogbon, in practical terms was placed higher in rank than any of the high chiefs as he was the only one allowed to wear four rows of beads on his ankle and wrist. [13]

The creation of the Owadogbon title seems to have been a needless attempt to depress the power and influence of the high chiefs of the Inner Council, particularly the Ojomo, who had been driven into exile and the Ojumu, next in rank to the Olowo. The Owadogbon then became the commander of the Owo army, thus usurping the position traditionally held by Oshere and other chiefs. [14]

In the end, some of the most influential chiefs began to plot against the king. But the king found in the Otu Bamgbosun a ready instrument for defending himself. Like Ajaka, and Adedipe before him, Orimolade had maintained very close relationship with the Otu Bamgbosun, and he began to use it to overawe the chiefs. One by one, some of the chiefs opposing him were assassinated and so were many other influential commoners. The members of the corrupted Otu Bamigbosun unleashed a reign of terror on Owo citizens, and looted the properties of people who did not support them with contributions in money

---

[10] Ashara, The History, Elerewe, Fayemiwo.
[11] It has been said that this title is an imitation of Obayagbona of Benin. Ashara, The History.
[12] Olamoju Akombo was the first Owadogbon. Others since then are Ogunleye, Ogungbuji, etc
[13] The other chiefs, even the Ojumu, could only wear three rows of beads.
[14] The Owadogbon assumed the title of Balogun. The Sashere was the traditional commander of the Owo army (cf. the Iyasere in Benin). But it seems that he had conceded this power to the Oshere, who came to dominate the Owo army because of the large number of volunteers from his Quarter, Ehin-Ogbe, in the early part of the 18th century. But by the later part of that century, Oshere only held the position nominally. It was alleged by Ashara that Oshere lost the title because he personally let Olowo Ajaka down in the Akoko wars. In the later part of the 19th century, when Agunloye came back from exile in Akure and had taken over control of the Bamigbosun, with his sizeable well equipped following, he became the 'de facto' Commander- in-Chief of the Owo army, after the brief ascendancy of the Owadogbon.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and materials. [15] Members of this corrupted Otu Bamigbosun manipulated Owo laws and customs to suit their purposes and constituted themselves into law-enforcing agencies, summarily executing judgments on their victims.[16] The Bamgbosun group extended its tentacles even beyond Owo city to the outlying towns and villages.

By the middle of the 1850 and into the 1860s, the Ibadan forces were sweeping through the eastern Yoruba country,[17] subduing almost all the kingdoms of the Ijesha, Oshun, Igbomina, Ekiti, Akoko and the far north-eastern settlements of the Iyagba, Owe, Ikiri, Abunu and Kakanda. [18] Even the ancient city of Ife came under Ibadan. [19] Throughout all this, Ibadan did not touch homeland Owo, even though places regarded as distant parts of Owo kingdom (as in Akoko) were conquered by Ibadan and given an Ibadan administration. On its part, Owo never interfered with Ibadan's activities, even though Owo probably commanded enough power to confront the Ibadan forces in some places known to belong to Owo kingdom.

At the same time, a new threat arose in the north from the Nupe from their country on the middle Niger. Invigorated by a surge of Islamic jihadist fervor, the Nupe had started to come about the late 1840s in a series of disjointed raids into the Akoko country and continued until the 1880s.[20] Though Owo traditions claim that Owo did respond to the Nupe raids, [21] it seems certain that such response was no more than feeble and brief. Further still, from the 1860s, a growing number of prominent Ekiti citizens (especially

---

[15] Although the atrocities perpetrated by the Bamigbosun have become distant memories, they are still remembered in Owo even today.

[16] The Egbe Ologun or Igbama was the traditional law-enforcing body of Owo. It appears that the Bamigbosun may have partly evolved from this body.

[17] Akintoye, Revolution and Power, Falola, The Political Economy of Ibadan.

[18] Obayemi, Ade, 'Kakanda: A People, A History, An Identity,' a paper presented at the Archaeology Division, Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1976: 1-23.

[19] Akintoye, S. A., 'Ife's Sad Century: the Nineteenth Century in the History of Ife,' Nigeria Magazine. #. 104, 1970.

[20] Flint, J.E., Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria, Oxford, 1960. Mason, Michael, 'The Jihad in the South: an outline of the 19th century Nupe Hegemony in Northeastern Yorubaland and Afenmai,' JHSN, # V, No. 2, 1970; Akomolafe, C.O., 'Akoko under Colonial Rule, 1900-1935,' M. Phil. University of Ife, 1976.

[21] Ashara, The History, Beeley, Intelligence report; Fayemiwo, oral traditions

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

from the kingdom of Ado which had somehow remained independent of Ibadan conquest and rule), began to raid parts of the Akoko country.[22] Emulating the Ibadan chiefs, these men built up independent military followings of their own and began to invade the Akoko country and the Yoruba territories to the north, beating back the Nupe in scattered engagements. Again, while all these were going on, Owo raised no finger at all. Ogedemgbe later befriended Idoani and while they least suspected, he attacked the town.[23]

In the early 1870s, the Ekiti war chiefs fighting in the Akoko country and the Ijesha war chief named Ogedemgbe[24] formed an alliance. Of this alliance, the leading members were Ogedemgbe (from Ilesha), Aduloju and Falowo (the latter two were from Ado-Ekiti). After stopping the Nupe in many places and subduing a number of Akoko towns and villages, the alliance encamped against Idoani, a very important market town in the Owo kingdom.[25] Unassisted by Owo, Idoani held on for about three years and succumbed in late 1876.[26] The allies, intent on going on to sack the city of Benin, then penetrated deep into the Akoko-Edo and Edo countries as far as Igueben, where they changed their minds and turned back.[27]

Why, then, was Owo so militarily silent throughout these conflicts, some of which affected Owo's vital interests? According to the traditions of many Ekiti kingdoms,[28] Owo's reputation as a strong military power remained intact throughout the late

---

[22] Oguntuyi, A Short History of Ado-Ekiti, Akintoye, Revolution and Power, Akomolafe, 'Akoko Under British Rule,' Asabia, Idoani Past and Present

[23] Awe, Bolanle, 'The Rise of Ibadan as a Yoruba Power.' Akintoye, Revolutionist and Power, Falola, Political Economy of Ibadan

[24] He later became famous as Commander –in –Chief of a great confederacy, *Ekitiparapo*, against Ibadan.

[25] Beeley, Intelligence Report, para 45, p. 67

[26] Asabia, Idoani.

[27] Egharevba says that Chief Ayobahan of Benin was dispatched by Oba Ovenramwen Nogbaisi of Benin to confront the invading forces. Ayobahan sent a secret message to Ogedemgbe, telling him that he would be opposed. The latter may have taken that as a cue to mean that he should turn around and return home and that was what he did. See Egharevba, A Short History, 1960: 39

[28] Akintoye, personal communications, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2005.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

nineteenth century, even till the coming of the British, and this was why the all conquering Ibadan stayed clear of the heart of the Owo kingdom. This Ekiti answer is not totally true as Ibadan commanded the power to subdue Owo at any time during the period. It has also been suggested that the answer was in the condition of Owo's political life for most of the nineteenth century. As earlier pointed out, Orimolade started his reign poorly. He was, like his father, a fear–ridden person and, in addition, a cunning and vengeful ruler who became notorious for employing assassination and other underhanded means to eliminate his rivals and subjects whom he suspected to be opposed to his rule. Under him, the government was never in the shape to rouse, unite and mobilize the people of Owo. And, by and large, the disruption and low morale of his reign characterized Owo's political life for the rest of the century.

The best that the Olowo Orimolade accomplished was some extension to the '*Yara*' system in the 1860s, to enclose the newer sectors of Owo. Even in this purely domestic enterprise, he received little willing support from his subjects, as is evidenced by the fact that his '*Yara*' (moats) was much poorer in width and depth than all earlier '*Yara*' constructions. Both during and after Orimolade's reign, refugees flooded to Owo from the fighting in Akoko and Idoani but, unlike in earlier times in Owo's history, Owo was unable to convert such immigrations into military or labor strength.

The above only partly explains why Owo did not go out to defend its Akoko and Idoani dependencies, but it does not touch the question why Ibadan did not attack Owo. Of all the eastern Yoruba kingdoms, Owo was obviously the most valuable to Ibadan's purposes. The old eastern route through Owo to Benin was a major source of imported arms for Ibadan, and Owo was, as she had been for centuries, the most important eastern Yoruba city on that route. Control of Owo would have been enormously helpful to Ibadan's wars. Yet, Ibadan never raised a finger against Owo, even though she overran

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

all of Owo's neighbors as well as territories over which Owo had claims. The answer to this is not that Owo had no political problems at home; in fact, internal troubles in Owo ought to have been an incentive for an Ibadan attack on Owo. The explanation is Owo's diplomatic skills. Throughout its history, Owo had lived in a situation demanding the most skilful diplomacy. Being the closest neighbor to an aggressively expansionist state like the Benin kingdom always put Owo in danger of losing its independence. Yet, in spite of some initial bruising by Benin, Owo sustained its independence, avoided serious attacks, and found ways to prosper from its location close to Benin. By the 19th century, in spite of political troubles at home, Owo had become exceptionally good in the handling of diplomatic situations. This is what made it possible for Owo to stay always beyond attack by the all-powerful Ibadan. Ibadan agents, and agents of the kingdoms fighting against Ibadan, were always at Owo, each to urge the Owo rulers to bar the road to the Owo market against the other. Owo did not accede to any such request, and yet she continued to be a good friend of both sides - and Owo's success in this matter enormously boosted the arms trade in Owo and, therefore, Owo's prosperity. Part of Owo's skilful response was a hard-headed calculation of her vital interests. She was prepared to let her far–flung territories go (in the Akoko to Ibadan, in Idoani to the Ekiti – Ijesha alliance); intrinsically, they were not essential to her prosperity.

Owo continued, therefore, to prosper commercially. In fact, the wars substantially increased commercial traffic through Owo. For Ibadan's earliest wars in the 1840s and 1850s, the Ibadan war chiefs and traders procured virtually all their arms and ammunition from the port of Lagos through the Ijebu country and from the Dahomey (Ajase) ports through the Egba country. Slowly, at first, and then in rapidly increasing volume, arms and ammunition reached Ibadan from the Benin market through Owo. For the emerging warrior chiefs in Ekiti, the source of arms and ammunition had to be Benin through Owo.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

When Ogedemgbe fled from the Ibadan army at Ilesha and came to make an alliance with the Ekiti war chiefs in Akoko, he too turned to Owo as his main source of arms and ammunition. In the 1860s, too, an Ibadan war chief, Ayorinde, fleeing from political and legal troubles in Ibadan, came to take refuge at Owo.[29] Seeing the rich and growing opportunity in trade at Owo, he embarked on large-scale procurement of arms and ammunition for sale to Ibadan. By the 1860s, therefore, traffic in arms and ammunition had greatly boosted Owo's commercial life, and the bigger traders in Owo were making quite substantial fortunes.

And even more was to come. By the late 1860s, Ibadan's supply of arms and ammunition through Ijebu and Egba routes faced increasing peril because of growing hostility of Ijebu and Egba to Ibadan. Ibadan invaded the Egba and Ijebu countries in order to force the routes open, but such actions only increased the hostilities. Ibadan was compelled to depend more and more on alternative routes – of which the Owo road became the most important by the early 1870s. About 1872, the British administration of the colony of Lagos, desirous to open a new route for Lagos trade to the interior, a route that would sidetrack the Ijebu and Egba blockades, explored a route through the Ilaje coast to Ondo and from there to the further interior. From about 1879, this route, known in British colonial literature as the Ondo Road, attracted a substantial share of the trade of Yorubaland with the coast. [30] While the route was being laboriously opened up in the 1870s, however, trade through Owo grew by leaps and bounds. And even in the 1880s, when the Ondo Road had fully come into its own, the flow in war materiel through Owo was not much affected.

During this period, Owo prospered in other economic ventures. Farming, always the occupation of most Owo citizens, continued to prosper also. Owo did not only produce

[29] Talbot, Southern 81., Asabia, Idoani, 27,
[30] Akintoye, S. A., 'The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, 1870-1895,' JAH, x, 4, 1969.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

enough yams, coco-yams (*koko Ibadan*), corn, beans and cassava to feed her population, she also became an exporter of some of these food staples to other parts of Yorubaland and Benin.[31] Products of Owo's deciduous and derived savannah countryside, especially the produce of the palm tree (palm oil, palm kernels, palm kernel oil and palm wine) featured more and more strongly in Owo's export trade in the late 19th century.[32] Benin came to depend very heavily on Owo for palm oil, 'apon' (oro nuts) and plantain. Traditionally, most of the cotton and dye-stuff produced in Owo had been consumed in Owo's cloth industry. In the late 19th century, Owo's cloth industry prospered so well that large quantities of cotton and dye-stuff flowed into Owo from the countries of the Ekiti, Ijesha and Oshun. Elephant tusks from the deep forest areas of the Owo kingdom especially from the area around Ifon and Ijugbere, fed a briskly growing industry in ivory carving in Owo, making Owo a major exporter of ivory products.[33]

In 1935, Beeley said that there was brown coal in the area near Ute to the north of Okeluse. Calcium or chalk found throughout the region had always been used to produce a chalky solution used for painting designs on Owo house walls,[34] public buildings and ancestral altars, calabash helmets worn by the Igbama, (*ayoyo youths)* in Iloro quarter during the Igogo festival. In the late 19th century, some of these products entered into the exports to places in the north such as Ilorin, Bida and Lokoja on the middle Niger.

---

[31] Forde, Daryll (Gen. Ed.,) Ethnographic Survey of Africa, Western Africa, (London: International African Institute, 1951), part IV: The Yoruba –Speaking Peoples of Southwestern Nigeria.

[32] Various palms in the forested and savannah areas were cultivated by the people of Owo. Palm wine (*emu*), palm oil, palm kernel oil, coconut oil, palm candles, rope, mats, baskets and brooms were among the many products obtained or made from the abundant palms.

[33] Allison, P. A., 'Elephant in the Ondo Province,' Nigerian Field, 11, December, 1943. The ivory trade had a disastrous effect on the elephant population. A French trader, at the end of the eighteenth century relates that after three months trading at Gwatto, he sailed with sixty thousand pounds of ivory. One old elephant hunter claimed that he killed two hundred elephants for the Oba of Benin in c1900, most of which came from the Owo area. See Allison, 'Elephant,' 180. Udo, Reuben K., Geographical Regions of Nigeria, Los Angeles, UCLA, 1970.

[34] Beeley, 'Intelligence Report,' para 27, 35 and 36.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Cotton grown on the farms in Owo were woven into a heavy durable cloth by the women. In 1928, Mackenzie estimated that more than eighty per cent of the women in Owo were well versed in weaving and that income from the industry must be considerable.[35] That must be seen to have had its roots in the earlier period in the pre-colonial era.

During this pre-colonial period, Owo's excellent textile products were exported through Benin to Europe.[36] These cloths, particularly the white and blue stripped ones, were taken to Okeluse and thenceforth to the port of Koko below the Benin River to be picked up by European traders. Tobacco[37] was also sold to traders from Benin and Idah. Leather amulets for the neck (*okun mila*) and the ankle (*kewu*), a shiny black rope used by the wealthy (*okun ide*), antimony or lead sulphide used for eye lashes or make-up (*tiro*), shea butter (*ori*), red glass beads used by chiefs (*iyun*) jasper beads (*Akun*) ordinary beads used by women (*lagidigba and ileke*) and two-edged daggers with leather sheaths (*bete bete),* were all imported from Ilorin, Bida, and Lokoja areas. Guns and gunpowder came through Okeluse from the port of Koko. [38]

A major development in the politics of Yorubaland from 1877 added to the boosting of Owo's commercial importance. In that year, the Ekiti, Ijesha, Igbomina and Akoko formed a grand alliance called the Ekitiparapo in order to free them from Ibadan's control. Their first push ended in a military disaster. Then the confederates regrouped and a stands off developed at Imesi –Ile and Igbajo on the borders of Ijesha territory. That stands off continued until the British brought all wars to an end in 1893 and

---

[35] NAI: Captain Mackenzie, J. A and Mr. Purchas, 'Report on Owo Division, Ondo Province, 1928,' para. 84, p. 25,

[36] These cloths were made on vertical looms by women. Few male weavers worked in Owo and their horizontal looms were known as 'Ilorin looms' .in the 1950s. This suggests that such looms were recent importation into the Owo area.

[37] Tobacco, like maize, was an American introduction. Ryder, The Benin and European, 85.

[38] Ryder, The Benin Kingdom, 89.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

established their protectorate over Yorubaland.[39] The Ekitiparapo camp, assisted by Ekiti and Ijesha traders resident in Lagos, carried enormous quantities of arms and ammunition through the Ondo Road and tried hard to get that route closed against the Ibadan. In this latter attempt, the Ekitiparapo achieved not much success, especially because the rulers of the kingdom of Ondo (the main kingdom on the route) were largely disinclined to take sides in the Ibadan –Ekitiparapo war. As a result, a fierce diplomatic contest went on in Ondo between Ibadan and Ekitiparapo agents throughout the war.

Though happenings in Owo were not as documented as happenings in Ondo, widespread traditions of the Yoruba people have it that Owo was also the scene of intense diplomatic maneuvering by the Ibadan and the Ekitiparapo.[40] It was widely believed in the Ekitiparapo camp that Ogedemgbe, Commander-In-Chief of the Ekitiparapo forces, had many influential friends in the Owo government, even including successive Olowos. It is not known what the basis for such beliefs was. It is known that one or two prominent Owo citizens, notably the Ojomo Agunloye (successor to the Ojomo Oludipe in exile) built up some independent military following, like Ogedemgbe and the Ekiti war chiefs, and saw some engagements outside Owo. It is also well known that these war chiefs commonly cultivated friendships with one another. Was Ogedemgbe a friend of his Owo counterparts, even though he had waged war against Owo interests? We do not know! Even in spite of Ogedemgbe's personal friendships, however, the Ekitiparapo had a considerable diplomatic clout in Owo. Ekiti and Akoko traders and Akoko refugees were an influential group in Owo and employed their influence to promote the interests of the Ekitiparapo there. But Ibadan also had some allies among the Idoani refugees in Owo, enemies of Ogedemgbe, who had led in the destruction of their town. Ekitiparapo and Ibadan diplomatic agents were in Owo endlessly, lobbying Owo rulers on behalf of

[39] Johnson, The History of Yorubas; Akintoye, Revolution and Power, chapter 1V and passim.
[40] Akintoye, 70, personal communications, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2005.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

their principals. But, till the end, neither of them succeeded in getting the other excluded from the Owo market. The trade in war materiel continued to boom in Owo. In fact, Owo also became widely famous for its black smiths and gun smiths who did a sizeable business in the repair and even fabrication of the muzzle –loaded Danish guns.

Meanwhile, Owo's internal political troubles continued. When Orimolade died, his two oldest sons, Anibanusi and Oladipo, each wanted to ascend the throne. But before either of them could do so, they also wanted to give their father a befitting burial. Anibanusi sought permission from the Ighare chiefs to allow him immolate a thousand slaves with his father. Anibanusi said that allowing him to bury his father with that number of slaves would accord the late king the required dignity of a monarch and that not allowing him to do so would be tantamount to heaping disgrace on the late king and his children. The Ighare chiefs disapproved but at the end, they granted him permission to use two hundred slaves. [41] Later, in their caucuses at the Ajo meetings, the Ighare chiefs then began to reason among themselves that Orimolade's children might be worse than their father and were therefore unacceptable as future king. [42]

In the ensuing contest for the throne, a bloody conflict broke out, with Orimolade's sons and supporters pitted against the otu Bamgbosun. Most of Orimolade's sons, numbering sixty, lost their lives.[43] At that point, some of Ogedemgbe's troops from the

[41]Personal communication, Chief Adafin Fayemiwo, Owo, 1968.

[42] It is said that the Ighare chiefs wished him well and dismissed him from their midst. He came back nine days later to request the support of the chiefs for his bid to succeed his father. They then gave him a date of installation. Mother says that Chief Adafin Ologede Ajibuwa, this writer's grandfather, told her that he felt sorry for the young man as he was leaving the meeting beaming with smiles because he had just received his appointment with the executioner. Anibanusi was killed the day he was to have been installed Olowo in 1876, with the help of his brother, Oladipo. The latter was also killed shortly thereafter. Ighare chiefs: group interview, 1985.

[43] All Orimolade's sons were slain except a 3- month old baby being nursed at Ilale-Oko. His mother escaped with him on her way to town when she heard that all the princes had been killed. It became impossible to identify the child as a young man later. All the daughters of the king were spared. D.O.File No. 355/226, Owo, May 3, 1945, p. 22, para. 6, piece entitled, 'The Olowo of Owo,' resolution adopted by the Owo Inner Council addressed to the Resident, Ondo Province, and Akure on the subject of accession to the Olowo's stool. Resolution was signed by the Olowo Olateru Olagbegi and forty one, (41) chiefs of Owo. It is noted in this resolution that '....some intriguers killed all the sons of Oba Aghagunghaye just to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ijesha country, with a detachment encamped against Idoani, decided to attack Owo. Awe says that the attack on Owo might have been aimed at avenging the murder of Orimolade's sons.[44] But the Owo authorities got wind of this imminent attack and its timing. An ambush was therefore laid for the invading Ijesha forces at a place between Isho and Emure Ijaloke. When the invaders walked into this ambush, they were routed. But it became clear later that Ogendemgbe had not approved of the venture and he had not participated. Owo traditions say that not many of the invaders escaped and their leader, Eleghenmodu, and most of the leaders were killed in the short encounter. Owo traditions say that one of the leaders of the Owo defense forces was a prince, Adara, who valiantly acquitted himself at the war front and from that point on he virtually became the Olowo- elect. Adara thus led the army that repulsed the Ijesha attack of 1876. And because of his valiant performance in the abortive Ijesha attack on Owo, Adara was selected to become the next Olowo. [45]

In 1876, Adara, a half brother and successor of Orimolade, was still at Ushama, when Agunloye returned from Akure to Owo. It is said that Agunloye came back with a retinue of two hundred and fifty armed bodyguards, all of them riding horses and brimming with charms and amulets. Agunloye went directly to Ushama to pay his respects to the new Olowo. However, Agunloye was given a very hostile reception.[46]After rejecting Adara's offer of a temporary accommodation at chief Sashere's compound, Agunloye went to the Ojomo's palace at Oke-Ijebu. The place was then in ruins because it had been left

---

serve their own purpose by setting one brother against another.' This confirms oral traditions collected by this writer on this issue.

[45] It is said that Adara killed at least seventeen of the invading forces because he showed their scalps at Owo. Ashara, The History, Fayemiwo and Elerewe.

[46] He was told to kneel down to salute the new Olowo and upon his hesitation, telling the courtiers that he had the Ifa paraphernalia (with the bete, bete and all) on him and he could not kneel down with it. The new Olowo then thundered: 'Nse ni Ifa na ma fa e lara, mo ni ki o kun le ki Olowo.' meaning: 'May the Ifa paraphernalia hurt you, I say kneel down to greet the Olowo.' It is said that Agunloye then knelt down and did obeisance to the new king.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

unattended for over forty –five years. The walls of the houses had fallen down and snakes and wild animals were roaming the place. But Agunloye, having erected a few tents for himself and his supporters, slept at the afin Ojomo (Ojomo's palace) that night and thenceforth.

After Agunloye had settled down, he started to work his way back into the scheme of things in Owo. First, he got control of the Otu Bamigbosun and most of the high chiefs who then found a new rallying point in him and the Ijebu people. Ojomo Agunloye then started to use his war boys, well armed, as the police and administrative officers of Owo kingdom. Because of the encounter between Adara and Agunloye on the day of his return, Agunloye became embittered against the new Olowo. It is said that Agunloye's first order of business was a secret message he sent to Adara, urging him 'to go to sleep,' (i.e. get rid of himself) before the Otu Bamigbosun moved in on him as he Agunloye had very confidential information that such a plan was in the offing. Agunloye did this several times within the next two years and each time, Adara, the Olowo, would reply that he did not want to go to 'sleep,' as he was not feeling sleepy. But Agunloye succeeded easily in getting rid of all the supporters of Orimolade either by assassination or exile.

It will be recalled that Adara ascended the throne in December 1876 but shortly after Adara's ascension, things started to move rapidly downhill for the monarchy. Owo traditions say that Adara plotted the assassination of his enemies particularly his half brothers, the other eligible princes for the throne. [47] Internally, Owo had been groaning under the atrocities and highhandedness of the Olowo Orimolade and the Otu

[47] Adara's agents made an attempt on the life of Atanleye, who had made himself a protégé of Ojomo Agunloye, virtually living at the Ojomo's palace. The assassins shot Atanleye on his way to his farm but the bullet only grazed his right arm, which when it healed up, appeared bended awkwardly. Hence his appellation 'Oda maleka,' meaning 'the one with the bended arm.' Anyone reported to have called him that name when Atanleye became Olowo and he heard of it, was a dead man.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Bamigbosun before Ojomo Agunloye's return. [48] But things had changed since the latter's return and the Bamgbosun then went under the command of Ojomo Agunloye. As a result, Olowo Adara remained a puppet in the hands of Ojomo Agunloye and the 'new' Bamigbosun society and so throughout the three years he was on the throne, Adara was just a figure head, confined within the four walls of the palace. He was hardly ever consulted on any major issue of state except for ordinary ritual performance and ceremonies. It is said that at one point, he sought the help of Ogedemgbe and later, Aduloju to help him dislodge the Ojomo Agunloye and be free from the powerful chiefs who then surrounded him. [49]

While that was going on in the Owo capital, in 1877, Agunloye seized the opportunity of a wrangling at Ifon to show who was really in charge in the Owo kingdom. He sent his forces to Ifon, as he was in command of a great force of Ijebu warriors and others drawn from the surrounding satellite townships. [50] In Ifon, after the death of Iremokun, the sixth Ireado[51] of Ifon, there was a succession dispute between his three sons –Opopo, (the Obanla), Ugbarugba, who had assumed the title of Idaniken and Eyinmoti, the Owadogbon of Ifon. Ojomo Agunloye first supported Ugbarugba's bid to gain the throne of his father with the title of Oloja of Ifon, but Ugbarugba was soon driven away by Eyinmoti, the Owadogbon. Ojomo Agunloye is said to have switched his

---

[48] The theme song among the Owo people at that time was 'Baba oke, Yeye odo, e ma re ti a gbo o, Owo ma ngbin,' meaning: 'Father in the sky and mother in the ground, be listening because Owo is groaning.' Chief Adafin Daramola.

[49] Monsignor A. O. Oguntuyi also mentions the invitation sent to Aduloju of Ado-Ekiti in this affray. *'Ni akoko yi ni Olowo ranse si Aduloju pe ki o ba on pa Ifon lenu mo. Boya nitoripe awon ara Iffon ran Ojomo lowo lati segun lori Olowo, tabi o ni idi miran, a ko mo. Aduloju gba be, o si fi Iffon ati Ukaro se awolo.'* Meaning: 'It was at this time that the Olowo (Adara) sent to enlist the help of Aduloju that the latter help him shut up the mouth of Ifon. Whether the Ifon people helped the Ojomo (Agunloye) to overcome the Olowo or for some other reason, we do not know. Aduloju accepted this invitation and overran Ifon and Ukaro. .' Oguntuyi, A. O., Aduloju Dodondawa: Oko –Ekiti, Oko Akoko, n.d., Ado-Ekiti, (n.d.), p. 41.

[50] This war, known as 'Ogun Ifon,' meaning, 'The Ifon war,' was fought in c1877. Ashara, the History.

[51] Ire Ado or 'Ere Ado,' meaning, 'The reward of the trip to Benin City,' (see chapter two on Ifon's beginnings)

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

favor and support from Ugbarugba to Eyinmoti, perhaps because of Ugbarugba's overtures to the Ezomo of Benin. [52] Eyinmoti finally triumphed over every other rival. [53]

Owo traditions suggest that Adara, the Olowo, was dissatisfied with his loss of power and influence, both having been 'usurped' by Ojomo Agunloye. Adara seems to be fighting to retain his position as the Olowo against his high chiefs, particularly the Ojomo[54] and he was also at logger heads with some of his brothers such as Atanleye who had become a protégé of Ojomo Agunloye. Adara made an attempt on the life of Atanleye and he failed. It was also alleged that Adara engaged in the slave trade of the period by outfitting kidnappers who seized Owo citizens and sold them into slavery at Idanre.[55] Each time Adara was found compromising himself; Ojomo Agunloye would suggest to him that he should kill himself before members of the Otu Bamgbosun moved in to deal with him. Traditions say that in 1879, Adara, in an attempt to escape from his involuntary confinement in the palace, ran into an ambush outside the palace walls. He was overtaken and killed at the Ogbara stream near present day New Church and School grounds at Isaipen quarters.[56]

Aladetohun, a brother of Adara and another son of Olowo Adedipe, succeeded to the throne in 1880. Immediately following his ascension, he started to make inquiries as to

---

[52] Beeley, para. 62.

[53] It is said that Ojomo Agunloye made the ruler of Ifon assume the title of Oloja instead of something like the 'Olufon' because Ojomo Agunloye regarded Ifon as a subject-state of Owo and therefore the ruler of Ifon could not bear the title of 'Olu' which would tend to imply equality with the Olowo. Agunloye, in the name of the Olowo, refused to confer the title of Oloba on the head of Isho for the same reason.

[54] See Oguntuyi, Aduloju, Dodondawa, Akure, (n. d.)

[55] The case of chief Osere, third in rank to the Olowo, really caused an embarrassment to Adara. Under a moonlit night at Ehin-Ogbe, his quarter, he was kidnapped, with a piece of stick put across his mouth to muzzle him. On his way to Idanre, when the kidnappers saw a shiny string around his neck, they recognized who their captive was. After profusely apologizing to him, they quickly returned him to Owo. On close enquiry, the kidnappers pointed to the Olowo's palace. Chief Adafin Fayemiwo: Personal communications, Owo, 1965.

[56] Ashara, The History. Adara is said to have escaped into Ajaka's egungun grove near the Ogbara stream, (New Church compound, Fajuyi road, Owo) and he held unto the horns of the pillars there saying 'Mo ya Erele,' meaning: 'I hold on to the pillars of Erele,' asking for mercy. But the two assassins did not spare him and his favorite wife. After raping his wife, they killed them both and removed the beads on their victims. Those responsible for this dastardly act are said to be some of the servants of Ojomo Agunloye. Chief Adafin Fayemiwo..

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

who killed his brother, Adara, and whenever he found any of the conspirators, he executed him. He then started to assert himself as the Olowo. This led to a direct collision with Ojomo Agunloye who had established himself as the *'de facto'* strongman or ruler of the kingdom. As a result of the position of the Olowos up to that point in their relationship with the high chiefs, it was impossible for Aladetohun to assert himself and survive. What he did was that each time Ojomo Agunloye told him to 'go to sleep,' he would collect all kinds of presents and give them to the Ojomo and the plot against him would dissipate. After a short while, say six months later, a new plot would start to brew again and Aladetohun would gather new materials in the form of drinks, big garments, (*ewu etu*), chieftaincy paraphernalia, (crowns) and rush them to Oke Ijebu and the plot would go away. After doing this for eight years and the enemies remained implacable, he went to consult the Ifa oracle. He was told that the time has come for him to do a manly thing and confront his accusers and die. And, in fact, if he did not do that, they were coming to get him because bribery would not do it any more. At that point, like Olowo Adara before him, Aladetohun was no more than a figure-head, under the thumb of the notorious Otu Bamigbosun headed by Ojomo Agunloye.[57] Aladetohun hardly exercised any powers, at all, beyond the control of his wives and his household staff in the palace. He reigned for nine years and having become frustrated with his helpless and hopeless situation, one day, having set the palace on fire, he committed suicide.[58] His last words are said to be a prediction that the white man would come and take over the

[57] He was styled 'Ojomo Agunloye bi Oyinbo,' meaning 'Ojomo Agunloye who sits steady on the throne like the white man.'

[58] It is said that on the day he died in 1889, Aladetohun put on his royal regalia for the Ore; he then danced to the beat of the Olusherepe drums, went to each of the more than a hundred Ughas (courtyards) and paid respect to his predecessors and then ordered that the palace be set on fire. When he was ready, he went to Ugha Egwankun, mounted the dais and after sitting himself there, he opened the calabash containing the poison (Igba Iwa) and committed suicide. Details obtained from Chief Adafin Atabanti Fayemiwo of Iloro quarter.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

administration of Owo kingdom after his death. He also said that the white man who was coming was bigger than the Otu Bamgbosun.[59]

Following the death of Aladetohun, another candidate, chief Modongho, appeared to have had the upper hand in the ensuing contest for the throne. In fact, chief Modongho, another son of Adedipe, was already selected and backed by the Edibo Olowo chiefs and he had started parading himself as the Olowo–elect. He moved into the half-way house of Chief Sashere Okotomuyiseni, where he worshipped his head, 'ru orun,' as the new Olowo. On one occasion, some of his men saw Atanleye, his half brother, sacrificing a small he-goat (*obuko*) to the god of the devil, 'esu' in front of the Ojomo's palace and they pursued him with the intention of sacrificing him to the *'esu'* himself if they could catch him. But Atanleye out ran his pursuers and since the shrine of the *'esu'* was not far from the Ojomo's palace, he ran into the place and disappeared into the *Ughas.* When his pursuers came to demand that he be handed over to them, the people at the Ojomo's palace denied ever seeing Atanleye enter the palace that day.

Then Ojomo Agunloye decided to act. On a set day in 1889, Agunloye called a town meeting of all the people of Owo with the purpose of introducing the new Olowo. It is said that thousands of people turned up for the meeting and the people had thought that he would be introducing chief Modongho as the new king. Ojomo Agunloye had instructed the Ighare chiefs of Iloro quarter, a few of the high chiefs, the leaders of the Ugbamas, (youths) and all the olojas of the satellite townships, 'ereko,' to be ready for war if need be. Chief Modongho appeared at the meeting with his supporters, clad in white garment with his head shaven clean, preparatory to his investiture as Olowo. His supporters, in the hundreds, were hailing him as the new Olowo.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Then Agunloye, with one hundred and twenty armed guards, stationed at strategic positions and some of them standing behind him, stepped forward and ordered the people to keep quiet. He explained that since his return to Owo, he had tried to see that good government returned to the kingdom by placing those he thought were suitable individuals on the throne but because of their perfidy, some of them ended up badly. And since the suicide of the last Olowo, someone had been arrogating the position of Olowo to himself. Ojomo Agunloye then said that he would put an end to the pretension that day by introducing the Olowo-elect. After his short speech, he called out the name of Olotu Atanleye, [60]and there and then, he commanded that the Ighare chiefs take him away to be installed the next Olowo.[61] Thus, the enthronement of Atanleye appears to have been received as a surprise in Owo.

Traditions say that Atanleye was a very remarkable individual because of his physiognomy – tall, lanky and handsome looking [62] -but with a strong will. Owo traditions say that he was an absolutist ruler as he believed strongly in the divine rights of kings. In the early part of his reign, he took upon himself the task of rebuilding the partly burnt palace and added a large section to the palace walls. He then set about purging the corrupted Otu Bamigbosun. He did not hesitate to execute members of the group when the opportunity presented itself.

Later, there developed a confrontation between Atanleye and his chiefs. But fortunately or unfortunately for him, his mentor, Agunloye, had died in 1890, shortly after his coronation and had been succeeded by his son, Ojomo Oyigun Oligbogi. But there was no more rallying point for the type of conspiracy that bedeviled Orimolade,

[60] According to Owo traditions, when chief Ojomo Agunloye called out Atanleye' s name, 'Olotu Atanleye,' the latter answered by saying, 'He e yo o, Oluwa mi!' meaning: 'I am here, my lord.'
[61] It is said that chief Modongho went home and put a gun into his mouth and shot himself, 'O yin ibon je.'
[62] He was nicknamed 'O gun eranko gidigan,' meaning, 'The one who rides a tough, big animal.' His personal horse was named Alamale, meaning that the horse is ' big but not lazy.'

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Adara and Aladetohun. And more, it seems the Ifa's prediction during Aladetohun's reign was about to come to pass. In 1897, the British Vice-Consul in Lagos, Phillips and his party, were massacred on their attempted forceful entry into Benin City.[63] Following that, a British expeditionary force was dispatched to Benin and the city was bombarded and conquered. The Benin authorities were arrested, tried and some of them were executed (for example, Chief Ologboshere of Benin), while the Oba, Overamwen Nogbaisi, was deported, first to Accra on the Gold Coast, and later to the Seycheles island, where he remained till his death.[64] Following that, the Lagos British colonial government, which had intervened in the Yoruba wars of 1877-93, declared a protectorate over Yorubaland.[65]

The 19th century witnessed the rise of external intrusions into the life of the Owo people. Conversions into the Islamic faith and military incursions in the north began to influence events in the south and in Owo. The position of the Olowo (the king) started to be much more contested. This intensity became more serious in the mid -19th century. The effects of this were the changes that started to creep into the mode of succession to the Olowo title. By the end of the 19th century, Owo had become fully re-integrated with their neighbors to the west. As time went on, Owo's insulation from the events emanating from the Yoruba heartland would end and she would be drawn into and participate in some way in the unfolding political drama of the period in Yorubaland. This was a major shift of focus and a major change in Owo's orientation. By the end of the 19th century, Owo had emerged as a unique Yoruba state strategically located to straddle the Yoruba and, by implication, the Edo worlds. Her culture, economy and political structure continue to reflect this. They continue to reflect her frontier-like image and character.

---

[63] Egharevba, A Short History; Igbafe, Benin Under British Administration; Ryder, Benin and the Europeans.

[64] Oba Ovenramwen Nogbaisi died in 1914 in the Seychelles Isalnd. Igbafe, Benin under British Administration, 76.

[65] Akintoye, Revolution and Politics; Johnson, The history of the Yorubas; Atanda, New Oyo Empire.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER NINE

The Political System of Owo in c1900

By the end of the 19th century, then, we come to a point at which all of the previous history of Owo can be seen together in its political system. The developments that have taken us up to this point have been described in preceding chapters. This chapter provides a detailed description of the Owo political system in the 19th century, and then compares it with the political systems of the Yoruba Oyo kingdom and the Benin kingdom. The comparison shows in detail the relative uniqueness of the Owo kingdom, even as it continues its practice of 'borrowing' ideas and institutions from its neighbors. In this, the Owo again show their characteristic 'frontier' position, of working new elements into a uniquely Owo framework.

By the time the British came in the late 1890s, the kingdom of Owo had existed for about eight centuries. Through that long history, its capital city, Owo, had grown to become one of the largest cities in the West African tropical forests. About the size of the population of this city by the 1890s, we have no information but we know that its land area had a radius (as encompassed by its walls) that exceeded three miles from wall to wall in all directions. Those city walls, each segment constructed as a deep ditch and heaped–up earth (the typical city wall system of the southern cities of the Yoruba people) had been constructed in stages throughout Owo's history. They had proved efficacious in defending the city, and still looked impressive until the 1930s when rapid city expansion began to obliterate them.

Beyond the capital city, the kingdom consisted of a number of villages within easy reach of the city, and towns and villages in far flung provinces - notably in the Idoani

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

area, the clump of settlements (now known as Irekari district) and in the Ifon area (the Ekamarun district), many settlements in the Akoko area, and a few villages in southern Ekiti, notably Emure-Ile. By the 1890s, the kingdom's claims in the Akoko area were merely nominal. During the second half of the nineteenth century, settlements in that area had suffered a series of invasions, and the Owo government had not helped them. By the mid-1870s, the Akoko area effectively belonged to the new empire of Ibadan, most of its settlements housing Ibadan *ajeles* (resident officials) and paying tributes to Ibadan. In 1877, the Akoko settlements had, on their own, joined hands with the Ekiti, Ijesha, and Igbomina to form the *Ekitiparapo* in a war of liberation against Ibadan. British intervention from 1886-93 to end that war was destined to be the beginning of British influence in the interior of Yorubaland. Effectively, therefore, the Owo kingdom, by the 1890s, was considerably smaller than it had been by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The royal ruler of the kingdom, with the title of Olowo, lived in Owo city in a large palace built on an imposing site, inset in expansive grounds, much of which had been preserved as virgin forest. Throughout Owo's history, successive Olowos had added to the functional buildings and spaces of the palace. By the 1890s, it had many halls and courtyards, each serving as place for a given function of state. As was the case in the capital of every Yoruba kingdom, the Owo kingdom's largest and most important market place, Ilede, was located in the foreground of the palace. Among other things, this symbolized the fact that the Olowo was the patron of all trade and traders in his kingdom. Smaller market places were located in various parts of the city and in every one of the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

other towns and villages in the kingdom. Owo was a great trading kingdom, more, in fact, than most other Yoruba kingdoms.[1]

The capital city was divided into a number of quarters, each under a Quarter Chief. Apart from the Quarter Chiefs, there were other High Chiefs directly involved in the central government at the palace, and specialized chiefs who, like the commanders of Owo citizen armies in times of war, performed special functions.

The highest chiefs constituted the Inner Council, which met in the palace daily and, with the king, took and authorized the implementation of all state decisions and so functioned as the highest court of the kingdom. Outside the capital city, each subordinate town and village was organized like the capital city, with a ruler and chiefs, all under the suzerainty of the king. By the 1890s, the Inner Council comprised fifteen high chiefs. The head chiefs of the subordinate towns and villages and the Quarter Chiefs constituted a sort of lower council of state. These made local by-laws and settled local matters in the areas of their jurisdiction. Each accessed the councils of the king's Inner Council designated by the king for that purpose.

Below the level of the lower council were the heads of the family group compounds. In every town and village, Yoruba people lived in family group compounds, each group being made up of many nuclear families all of which claimed descent from a common ancestor. The family group compound had a small government of its own, under the

[1] Apart from the well known markets of Ilede, Owa-Agbe (oja Koko), Oja Ojomo, (Ojomo's market), the other market centers included Omushen, Arigidi, (Iloro Quarter) Oja ta (oja Ori –Ota, evening market), Mori -Otun, Eleyewo, Oja-Owo, Ugbegun, etc. Later in the 18th century, the following market centers came into being: Olopo po, Amehintin, Ugbagbo, Oba, Ogbese, Ute, etc.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

family group leader (*Olori -Ebi*), which settled minor disputes among its members and exercised authority over family group property, especially landed property.[2]

A standing committee of the Inner Council served as the Council of Kingmakers. The function of this committee was to finalize the selection of a new Olowo whenever it was time for that. They were also responsible for advising the Olowo concerning his conduct and when disagreements arose between the Olowo and his chiefs or his subjects in general. Therefore, they bore the heavy duty of effecting an Olowo's deposition should the Olowo incorrigibly do things that threatened the welfare or security of the kingdom. In accordance with ancient Yoruba custom, these chiefs would then approach the king and respectfully ask him to 'go to sleep,' that is, commit suicide. Once a Yoruba man had been crowned king, only death could end his reign; he could not revert to the status of a subject citizen either in his own kingdom or in any other.

Upon being informed by the palace officials that the incumbent Olowo had 'slept', (meaning that the king had died) the Iloro Ighare chiefs, in black, would go in a single file to the palace. There, each chief would hold the string of coral beads he wore around his neck and rip it, to be replaced with a black thread.[3] They would order the 'oyingbo' dirge to begin and command market officials to disperse the market women. [4] Palace officials would cut the trees in the market and close the market. [5] Every one living in the palace had to leave immediately for their respective homes. The palace was then locked up and all the treasures, such as, the beaded crowns, swords, clothes, garments, and the

[2] Lloyd, P.C., The Yoruba Land Law, London, 1962

[3] The Ighare chiefs would wear this black thread, a sign of mourning, until a new Olowo was crowned.

[4] They would do this by throwing pieces of stick and stone into the market. It was always a very sad and troubling experience. For the next few hours, market women would scramble to escape injuries and there would be complete pandemonium in the market area.

[5] The main market, Ilede, would close for business until a new Olowo was crowned. Henceforth, all marketing would be done at the Igbo Ogwata site or the Owa-Agbe market, otherwise known as Oja-ikoko, (pots market) attended every fifth day.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

big umbrellas were inventoried and kept in a safe place. Throughout the next seventeen days the *oni meme egwa* would use his instrument to bewail and mourn the passing of the king.

During an interregnum, the Inner Council was responsible for the proper government of the kingdom. Chief Ojumu would act as President of the Inner Council until a new king was installed. The war chiefs, with the hunter's guild, provided security and protected the kingdom and defended it in case of an external threat or war. It was to every Owo man an honor and glory to fight in defense of hearth, home and the country which gave him birth.[6] The palace was maintained and the treasures kept in a proper and secure place by the Udeli, chief Ashaipan, of Isaipen. This chief may not meet the new Olowo, once installed, and so had to leave the scene once the king was on the throne.

The Olowoship title was handed down in the line which traced its genealogy back to Olofin (Oduduwa). According to sources in the Owo Divisional files in the National Archives at Ibadan, there were five ruling houses in Owo in the 1940s.[7] The title goes to a son of an Olowo, but not necessarily the most senior among them. The contest for the throne was open to the sons of the recently deceased Olowo and sons of previous Olowos. In several cases, brothers did succeed each other. Three considerations were emphasized: the revelation of the Ifa oracle, the candidate's capabilities and the candidate's character.

If an Olowo had performed the Ero ceremony, he might be allowed to select his own successor with the title of Idaniken, who would then be trained in his father's duties.

---

[6] Ashara, The History, 34

[7] NAI: Olowo: Custom Regarding Selection, Owo Division File, 1/1, # 679, included statements and petitions concern the selection of Olowo in 1942-45. The petitioners in the file include Baderinwa Atanleye, Aragun Ogunoye, 'Chiefs of Owo,' J.O. Ero, and Adedapo Orimolade. A summary statement was prepared by J. F. Hayley, District Officer for Owo Division.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

[8]This was very rare in the history of Owo and attempts by the Olowo to foist the idea of an Idaniken on Owo people often led to the undoing of that particular, incumbent Olowo.[9] Members of the royal family, the Omolowos, had the responsibility of selecting nominees from among eligible contestants for the throne. They would bring their nominees to the members of the Inner Council, the kingmakers, for the final selection. No selection or installation was valid without the Inner Council's approval. The Ighare chiefs, in spite of the loss of most of their powers, still had to give ritual approval to the selection, and they were also responsible for the installation rituals for the king.

A candidate for the throne of Olowo must fulfill some requirements and meet some qualifications. First, he must be a son of a successful Olowo,[10] that is, one who had reigned and died on the throne. He did not have to be born while his father was on the throne. [11] This means that once enthroned, his father must not have suffered the humiliation of dethronement or death in exile. The candidate must not have any known serious illnesses such as leprosy, epilepsy, mental disorder, etc. He must not have any of his body parts missing. For example, a missing toe or finger would constitute grounds for disqualification by the kingmakers, in this case, the Ighare chiefs. He must not be a man fond of bad medicine.

---

[8] cf. the 'Idaniken' of Owo with the 'Edai n'iken' used for the heir apparent in Benin. In Benin, the Edai n'iken lived in the Uselu village. Egharevba, Short History, p. 14. The Idaniken of Owo lived at Ushelu sub-quarter of Igboroko Quarter. Ashara, The History, 34

[9] One of the alleged reasons for the assassination of Renrengenjen is said to be his attempt to foist an Idaniken on Owo people. However, it is said that Imagele and Omasan were Idanikens who succeeded their respective fathers, Ogeja and Alamunren.

[10] A successful king was one who had performed the Ero ceremony performed every five years and witnessed a few such Ero ceremonies after his own. The immediate Ero after the king's was performed nine years later. E.g. It is reported that Adedipe Elewuokun performed the Ero and nine Ero celebrations followed his own, and he then beat the Bembe. He ruled Owo for 52 years (c1781-c1833). Chief Olotu Ijasan, the Owore of Owo, aged 96, personal communication, 1986.

[11] cf. the Abilagba requirement of other Yoruba kingdoms, e.g. Ijebu-Ode. For this, see Ayandele, E.A. 'The Changing Position of the Awujale of Ijebuland under colonial rule and independence,' in Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikime, (eds.) West African Chiefs: their changing status under colonial rule and independence, African Publishing Co., New York and University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 1970:231-54.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The selection process began shortly after the announcement of the death of the reigning Olowo. Jockeying for power must have started among the eligible princes even before the death of the last king among princes of the royal family. His death would only intensify the competition that had been going on informally among the candidates, who were obligated to lobby the senior Ighare chiefs.[12]

Once a candidate was selected, accepted and certified as fit and approved by the chiefs, a day, an Ugbegun market day, held every seventeenth day interval, was set for the candidate to meet the Ighares at the top of the 'Ilabejin' stone-hill (*ori ota Ilabejin*), near Otapete, about 15 kilometers from Igbo-Ogwata. Clad in a white agbada (loose garment) and head shaven clean, the candidate was sworn to an oath of secrecy by the Ighare chiefs- an oath of mutual allegiance between him and the Ighare chiefs with the blood of a goat. [13]

Following this ceremony, usually done at nightfall, the candidate was led by the Ighare chiefs into town. During the elapsing three months, he would be a royal guest in the home of chief Sashere. While there, the Oshorun would worship his head. His slaves attended him like a king by his retainers. The chiefs would be stopping by to pay their respect. Three months later, he was formally introduced as the next Olowo to the Omolowos, the high chiefs and the Owo people.

Chief Olisagho[14] and the Ighare chiefs performed the actual coronation ceremony of the Olowo at the Ogho shrine (Igbo Ogwata or Okiti Asegbo). After the rituals had been

---

[12] A discussion of the suitability of a candidate for the office of Olowo was a regular item on the agenda at the Edunma (Adanigbo), Ejugha and Ibode ajo meetings in Iloro quarter.

[13] 'Ori ota Ilabeji lati bura wipe a o ni pa omo wa,' meaning: 'On the top of Ilabeji stone hill where we swore not to kill each others' children.' This saying was always invoked by the Ighare chiefs to remind the Olowo of the oath taken before his coronation. Oral traditions: Ighare Chiefs of Iloro quarter, at the Ejugha meeting, Chief Arogho Alagboro, the acting Akowa's residence, Iloro, January 1987

[14] Chief Olisagho, a hold-over from the Elefene regime.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

completed, he was led to Ushama, a sub-quarter of Ehin-Ogbe quarter, where he would spend the next three months. While there, he learned the rules and rituals of the office of Olowo and how to respond to the greetings of his chiefs, an important aspect of his office.

At Ushama, [15]the newly crowned Olowo was entertained and the Owo people feted.[16] On the seventeenth day, he celebrated his iwuye ceremony. After the three months have elapsed, amidst the cacophony of drumming and blaring of horns and trumpets, the new Olowo was led to the palace. It was customary to break a wall surrounding the palace to create a temporary entrance through which the king entered. Later on that day, at the Egwankum Ugha, (Egwankun courtyards) the palace, the Ighare chiefs would blindfold the new king and request him to move forward and choose one of the swords in a pile in front of him. Each sword belonged to a particular past Olowo and it was the thinking of the Ighare chiefs that, by choosing that particular sword, he had chosen the mode of his rule and that his rule would be similar to the Olowo whose sword he picked.[17]

In concept, the Olowo was a religious and secular ruler. In his religious capacity, he was the visible symbol of the deity. That was the abiding image of Yoruba kings. The king had a distinctive adornment that tended to set him apart from the common run of the people in the kingdom. This adornment included a crown, regalia and other paraphernalia of office.

---

[15] For a short period of time, the Olowo is said to have resided at a place called Ushama at the new site before moving to Okiti-Asegbo, in the early days of settlement. In commemoration of this, a newly crowned Olowo initially stayed at Ushama for three months. There is also an Ushama where the new Oba of Benin resides following his coronation. See Egharevba, A short History.

[16]It is said that, in 1938, the Ipele townspeople feted the people of Owo kingdom for the entire three months' stay of Olowo Ajike at Ushama because his mother hailed from Ipele.

[17] Ashara, The History, Ighare chiefs of Iloro, etc.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Olowo did not wear a crown during the Igogo festival. Instead he stuck into one side of his hair the tail feathers of a special bird called Okin, a rare forest bird whose white delicately long tail feathers have been part of the symbols of royalty among the Yoruba people from ancient times. At the Ore festival, he wore a four –angled crown known as Geru or another type of crown with two horns bent downwards. When he was ready to dance among his people, he wore the typical Oduduwa crown – the beaded conical crown with frills veiling his face. A Yoruba crown was incomplete without the irere okin (tail feather of the Okin) swaying delicately on top of it.

The robes were always amongst the best ones available as they were procured from Europe, from the 15th century, through the Benin ports. He wore an abundance of beads when performing the Igogo. These were coral beads or s*eseki*, woven into large bands called *pakato.* He wore two strings of coral beads, *jasper*, one-inch long hollow tubes strung together, around the neck, with a frontal opening for one -inch long golden tubular dividers. The chiefs wore a single set of beaded string. The Olowo had twelve rows of beads on each wrist and ankles. He wore a shirt of beads over the *Ibolukun*, a Victorian-like skirt when going out into the town during the Igogo. [18]A young man bore a sword that was totally covered, for adornment, with beads, *agra or seseki*, in front of him at all times and twelve young men bearing long stemmed *irukere* (with handles covered with fine beads and leather), stood in two rows before him. When he did appear in state, he rested his hands on either side, on a small pillow, held with both hands by two retainers, each on either side of him, among other retainers while another stood behind him with a large parasol. The Olowo moved amidst a train of, at least, twenty retainers. These

[18] For more details, see Abiodun, Rowland, 'The Kingdom of Owo,' in Drewel, et. al., Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought, New York, 1989. 45-89

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

retainers had to walk when he walked and trot when trotted or danced to the tune of the olusherepe drums or the beating of iron gongs, during the Igogo parade. This was a big task for those assigned the role and they were highly regarded because of their constant nearness to the person of the Olowo.

On ordinary occasions, when the Olowo appeared to his people, he had an *irukere (horse tail)* in his hand. The *irukere,* an emblem of peace and grace, was a specially prepared horse's tail of spotless white. When the king spoke, he made his speech *soto voce* and whatever he said was repeated to the assembly in a loud voice by one of the stewards, for example, chief Oshowe, the speaker.

The Ehin-Ode, a large assembly hall was occupied by the musicians, the trumpeters, *onikankanki, oloye, afunfere and oni meme egwa,* a specialist, who blew a kind of special flute specifically, designed for the Olowo and is said to have been given to him by Oduduwa when he was leaving Ife. This instrument was very much cherished and revered by the Owo people.[19]

Specially constructed large umbrellas were part of state or royal paraphernalia. Because it was a royal prerogative, private use of umbrellas was barred particularly in the presence of the king and in the palace generally. Chiefs were allowed to use their own umbrellas on the streets but not in the palace. When the Olowo honored a chief, he allowed him the use of his lesser umbrellas.

The state umbrellas were very large and covered a wide area when opened up. When two large state umbrellas were opened and placed side by side, they provide a large area

[19] The Owo people revered this instrument or imeme-egwa, trumpet of the king. It is said that it was a special gift from Olofin (or Oduduwa) for the first Olowo on his departure from Ile-Ife. It was used to announce the ascent of the king, 'he *he he he he, wo Ogwa tan, wo Ogho tan,*' meaning: 'Look at the Olowo, look at Owo,' in admiration of the new king. To announce the death of an Olowo, the *Oni-meme-egwa* would blow the trumpet and say: *'Owo te te te te, ekun ma fi iru bale o!'* meaning: 'Owo in anguish, the Tiger has touched the ground with its tail,' etc, and he used his instrument to wail.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of shade from the elements. Most of the state umbrellas were white in color but the Olowo also used umbrellas of other colors. These included ones of blue, yellow, red and rainbow colors, particularly during the Igogo festival.

The Olowo appeared in state on a few festive occasions, chiefly during the Igogo and Ore festivals. The Ehin–Ode, a large rectangular hall, the size of a football field, stood at the southern end of the palace, with a covered verandah running around it. At the northern end of it was an entrance, a small room called O*na Agodo*, which led into the inner chambers. To the left of the room was an entrance which led outside, adjoining a narrow strip, *Ako.*[20] The Olowo received his most important chiefs for consultation at the entrance into the Ehin-Ode, that is, the O*na Agodo.* On the day of Olowo's Igogo, after dressing for the occasion, he stepped through the *Ona Agodo* into the *Ehin-Ode* hall, raised a theme song and started to dance to the Igogo music before going to the other parts of town. On such occasions, the floors of the *Ona Agodo* and *Ako* were covered all over with mats and the state chair or throne was covered with purple or scarlet cloth. The posts were decorated with velvet clothes and the walls with various ornamental hangings.

The throne of state was made of wood, exquisitely carved. The throne was highly valued because of its symbolism as the authority of the land.

The only other day the Olowo appeared in state was the day of Ore, the grandest of the ceremonies by the Olowo. Ore took place in March or April to commemorate the ascension of the king.[21] On the occasion of Ore, the glory of the Olowo and that of the Owo people were on display. It was a two -day affair in which the whole town was agog

[20] Short for *akomaduse*, 'in which it is impossible to deny meeting someone if you have met the person there earlier that day.'

[21] The Ore was prohibited early in the 20th century because it was deemed too expensive by the British Colonial Government but ostensibly, it was banned because it rivaled the celebration of the British Empire Day. In the 1940s, when the celebration of the Ore was revived, it was renamed *Ugbade* by Sir Olateru – Olagbegi and celebrated in March of every other year.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and presents were brought from the outlying settlements and dependencies of Owo. The celebration of the Ore was much more pronounced in the 19th century particularly during the reign of Olowo Adedipe Elewu-Okun.

On the eve of the Ore celebration, at about 09:00pm, all the musical bands in the capital town of Owo would assemble at the Ehin-Ode hall, *Ugha Ehin-Ode*.[22] Each band would stake out a vantage position to display the talent of the group.

At the beginning of the eve, the Olowo would come out through the O*na* A*godo,* ensconced in the midst of his many retainers. Two males were on either side of him, each carrying a small pillow upon which each arm was resting. The Olowo wore an embroidered *agbada*, with an ordinary cap and *digo* pants. The women would call out his cognomen, *Odigho*, *Oke ila ehin Ogho*, etc ('The disciplinarian,' 'the high hill behind Owo,' etc), above the din and cacophony of musical sounds and trumpets. When he got to the stand of the first band, it struck up a tune in praise of the Olowo. Then the king would dance to the tune of the band. Once the king was on the floor, the musical beat became more intensified. It was always a great spectacle to behold. All the chiefs would dance with the king- each kneeling down at intervals to salute him. The *afunfere, onikankanki, oloye* and the retainers and the stewards would be praising him and would be dancing and milling around him. The retainers served as bodyguards for the king.

After spending about fifteen minutes with the first band he went to the next one and spent as much time with the band and so on, until he got to the last one. Sometimes, this might go on till about 03:00 A.M. As this was going on, there would be drinking and

[22] These bands included the *Umoba*, an ensemble of the princes and *Esha*, an ensemble of the princesses. The other bands were Igbade, Osiji, Are, Laghalogho, Ogagago, Apapara, Ajabure, Agherebe, Reso, Bembe, Owotoro, Ijebutoro, Aje, Oseghe, Arile, the last two were women bands.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

merrymaking by the people. The hall was always packed full with people and in spite of the number of people, there was enough to eat and drink.

The following day, the messengers of the Olowo delivered mounds of pounded yam called *idado iyan*, each the size of, at least, a butterball, to the quarter heads' house. Each load of forty idado, with a whole deer meat, would be delivered to each quarter- Iloro, Igboroko, Ehin-Ogbe, Isaipen and Ijebu (from c1781 when the quarter was created), with Igboroko receiving double that portion. The Olowo also gave each quarter and the youths a cow, with two going to Igboroko. The Olowo sent a goat with two big kegs of palm wine to each quarter, again double that number went to Igboroko. Most of the food and drinks sent to the quarters were from gifts coming into the capital from the outlying districts. The Olowo slaughtered two hundred goats for his guests who would be calling at the palace on the occasion.

At 04:00pm, the *Ugha okunrin*, the men's hall near the Ugha Eduma, whose size was about twice the size of a football field, would start to fill up with people. A stage was set up for the Olowo with a dais and a canopy where he would appear in state, surrounded by the senior queens, the king's consorts, called O*lori,* each *wearing* her crown. At the site, about two dozen slaves or Ayewase, half cut (cf. the ilari in Oyo), wearing beautiful clothes, were seated on the left and right in front of the throne but in the open air under two large umbrellas, one on either side, a wide space being left between them.

There was a row of about twenty to twenty-five large umbrellas each on the right and the left, both rows facing each other, leaving a wide avenue between them from the throne to the main entrance gate. Under those on the right were seated the Edibo Olowo chiefs and on the left, the Olojas and Bales of the townships and villages surrounding

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Owo and subject to Owo's authority. On the great distance, opposite the Olowo's dais, were seated the Ighare chiefs of Iloro quarter. Behind the rows of seated dignitaries were throngs of people, some of who were members of the chiefs' parties and some of whom were spectators. It was usually a concourse of people out there gawking at the spectacle[23].

The first group to take the stage was the *Omobas* and the *Ikens*, princes, who were members of the *Umoba band.* They danced before the king, knelt down and saluted him. Then the E*sha,* the princesses' band, would take the floor after saluting the king. After their appearance, they would salute the king again. Each chief, starting with Chief Ojumu, in their turn, saluted the king and took the floor to dance to the olusherepe drums. Each important chief had his own patented beating style of the olusherepe drums to which he danced on this occasion. Each chief appeared in his own bloated *ibolukun* with the *Orufanran,* chiefly regalia. Otherwise, he wore the standard *chiefly uniform of Udaigha, pakato, and Udamalore* and held the dancing sword, *ape,* (*eben* in Benin); he twirled this in the air as he moved to the rhythms and beats of the olusherepe drums. After the Edibo Olowo chiefs had danced, the Ojomo would salute the Olowo and danced. Then the Ighare chiefs of Iloro took the floor, saluted the Olowo, danced in turn and then returned to their places, standing and holding their dancing swords upside down.

At that point, the Olowo would prepare to take the floor. He wore a coral gown and the coral four-angled beaded crown, *ade olugege merin or Geru,* with a bunch of *irere okin* on top of the crown. He also wore a coral gown of ankle length, on top of his own

[23] During the colonial period, British officials would come from the surrounding Districts and Provinces, far and near, with their cameras, taking pictures of the people, places and events. They would be sitting with the king's party high up on the dais when they were not taking pictures with the people or dancing themselves.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ibolukun and this made the Olowo look bloated and red all over. He held two dancing scimitar-like swords, *ape*, one with a flat blade and the other with crossed blades, (*ape olugege merin).* The Olowo twirled these dancing swords in the air as he danced to the rhythm of the olusherepe drums. The retainers, who were at his side at all times, would yell, at regulated intervals, '*E wu mo ro, ewu mo ro; Oro o o, Baba o.*' The Olowo's special beat of the olusherepe drums would be roaring. It was a thing of beauty to behold as the Olowo appeared at the highest point of his glory.

He danced from the foot of the dais towards the center of the rectangle that had been constructed by the position of the chiefs under the state umbrellas. He then danced to the opposite end of the rectangle, where the Ighare were standing with their dancing swords turned upside down. After that, he would dance back or may stop to walk back to his throne on the dais, if he felt tired. When he returned to the dais after about forty–five minutes later, the Umoba band would strike up a tune again and the O*loris* (king's consorts or queens), would start to sing in praise of their husband. As these were going on, the Oshowe would announce that the Ore had come to an end and the chiefs would then depart for their homes.

After the long rites of his coronation and installation had been completed, the Olowo disappeared into the seclusion of the palace and thereafter appeared in public only on the annual Igogo and Ore, when robed or crowned, he took his place in the throne room at the '*Ona Agodo*' in the Ehin-Ode courtyard. Apart from this, he rarely left the palace officially, although on moonlit nights he was permitted by custom to take an evening stroll incognito. Within the palace, numerous carefully graded officials attended him:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

among these were his *ajasin* or *apoko* esin, musicians, drummers and flutists, amounting to several would be attending to his needs.

The royal residence of a Yoruba king or oba, known as afin, (palace) was in many respects the most impressive part of any town in Yorubaland. It occupies the largest area of the land of any compound in the town. It is an administrative institution as well as a residence.[24] The first palace, according to Owo traditions, was at Oke-made (about five miles south of the present location of Owo town), where Olowo Imade had established the initial Owo settlement. A few years later, the palace was moved to Ugbo-Ogwata or Okiti-Asegbo, present day Town hall. Following the assassination of Olowo Renrengenjen at the site, Olowo Ogeja decided to move the palace to Oke-Ekusi, (Ekusi hill), the original home of the Ighare chiefs of Iloro quarter. [25]

The Owo palace is the largest extant palace, even today, among all the Yoruba palaces.[26] In the pre-colonial period, it served many purposes: it was the nerve center and hub of the kingdom; it was the residence of the incumbent Olowo, his wives and their children. In addition, the palace was the place where strangers, who came to visit, repaired if they had no accommodation elsewhere. Also, there were people who served the king in the capacities of trumpeters, drummers and others.

---

[24] Ojo, G. J. Afolabi, Yoruba Palaces, London University Press, London, 1966:66

[25] The present site, near the Owo Federal Government School, est. in 1903.

[26] Ojo gave various dimensions and sizes of a few Yoruba palaces among which is the Owo palace. He also dealt with the functions, shape and types of rooms, halls, assembly halls and their uses. He gave the area of the palace within the town walls as 1,331 acres and the area of palace within the palace walls as 108.5 acres with the percentage of palace to area of town as 8.3%, Ojo, Yoruba Places, op. cit. the Owo palace is of the Ife type and the Olowo is one of the first class Obas of Yorubaland.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Thus, the Olowo lived in the palace, an exalted residence with the central market, Ilede in front.[27] Owo traditions say that the palace had at least one hundred, big and small, courtyards, (each called Ugha), in the seventeenth century. Some of these courtyards served as shrines and temples. Some parts were reserved for the worship of the ancestors believed to be living in the other world. [28] The Ugha Moron was a special courtyard set apart for the worship of the Olowo's ancestors or past Olowos and the worship of other forms of deities. The *Ulabi* was conducted in this courtyard with freshly picked kolanuts.

About twice the size of a football field, the largest courtyard, known as Ugha Okunrin, (Men's courtyard) was used for the largest state assemblies and festivals. Although the buildings surrounding this courtyard have vanished, the spot is still well demarcated and used for the same purpose during the Olowo's Ugbade which replaced the Ore. (It is now a soccer field) behind the Ughas. Every chief brings his own set of olusherepe drums for the dance which is watched by all and sundry in Owo.

Next to the Ugha Okunrin in size is the public assembly courtyard known as Ugha Ehin-Ode, which is still intact, measuring about 131 feet long and 31 feet wide, excluding the space of the covered verandas. Every chief has his own allotted seating place along the pavement of this courtyard, arranged, according to status, in decreasing order of importance away from the central seat occupied by the Olowo himself. In another courtyard, known as Akomaduse, all senior chiefs pay homage in the morning to the Olowo. Later in the day, the Olowo relaxes and plays games there. Chiefs of all ranks

[27] Some of the attributive names of the Olowo portray him as the premier occupant of the palace, Afin, to the extent of associating him inseparably with the palace or ascribing to him the ownership although the qualification of the temporary ownership is understood.

[28] Although only seventeen of the courtyards remain today, the rebuilding of the 'Ughas' into modern buildings has made it impossible to identify their specific locations within the palace grounds as the new buildings have replaced many of the old courtyards.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

attend in rotational groups the ajo feasts every nine days in the Edunma courtyard, Ugha Edunma.

A few of the courtyards are reserved almost exclusively for the Olowo's use. He takes his meals in the Odo-Uli or Iyakeji courtyards. He puts on his regalia for the Igogo festival in Ugha Inoli, (Inner court yard) which is the apartment overlooking Ugha Odo-Uli. He worships his head with freshly harvested kolanuts once a year during the Ulabi ceremony in the Ugha Moron with the assistance of Oshoron-Ode and makes medicine in the Ugha Agwe, (Agwe Courtyard) where the Ifa oracle is also consulted on behalf of the Olowo. The retiring place is the Ugha Inogwa (or Inu-Owa courtyard), which is the apartment surrounding the Ugha Egwankun. This apartment is still scrubbed every day by the wives who, in the past, had to be naked while doing so.

The wives of the Olowo have their own special courtyards. Among those specifically reserved for them and out of bounds to all men, except the Olowo, are Ugha Oluwabunmile, Ugha Tere, Ugha Gbedu, Ugha Okelade and Ugha Eyeluwa. The last two are assigned in particular to the Oluwa, who is the head of the Oloris (wives of the Olowo). Food and presents are shared among the Oloris in these courtyards. Besides, Oloris are tried for major offenses and also punished there. In another courtyard, known as the Yeyeogwa, some of the wives of the Olowo are installed chiefs there. The chieftaincy titles include, in order of rank, the YeyeOluwa, the Yeyesorun, YeyeAmeri, YeyeAsama, YeyeArala and YeyeAribo. These wives of the Olowo are entitled to wear akoro crowns (coronets). In the Ugha Yeyeogwa, the wives of the Olowo make their sacrifices and celebrate during the new maize and new yam festivals. The wooden drums,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Gbedu, beaten by the women on such occasions, are kept along the pavements of this courtyard.

Foodstuffs presented by the people of Owo kingdom and districts to the Olowo during the Igogo and Ore were stored in the Ugha Ogba, (the Barn courtyard). Behind the Olowo's modern three-story building are the multiple courtyards, Ugha–Oke-Agbala, (Garden courtyards) where the princes and the princesses romped and played. There are also the Ugha Iyakeji and Ugha Odo-Uli courtyards that go along with the new section of the palace.

The built up part, situated along the middle section of the foreground of the palace, faced eastwards. The Ugha Moron, (Moron's Courtyard), a multiple compound, is fenced in by its own wall on the northern, western and southern sides, although the wall was less impressive than the one which ran round the whole palace and which was shared by the built up part along its eastern side while the remainder of the land area was left as virgin forest.[29] No large-scale farming was carried on here or elsewhere for the Olowo. Instead, the townspeople regularly subscribed foodstuffs harvested on their own farms for the Olowo and members of his household. As a result, a considerable part of the forest was not touched at all for farming purposes. It was virtually as dense as the forest of the remote parts of the kingdom where many animals abounded. [30]

[29] Before the encroachment of modern public and residential buildings on the forested fringes of the palace, the space taken up by the built-up part was less than one–eleventh (1/11) of the entire palace grounds. Nearly all the remainder of the palace grounds was given up to forest, about 105 acres in extent. In the past, the forest was only nibbled at the edge, where some of the wives of the Olowo made small gardens. See Ojo, Yoruba Palaces, 1966, op. cit. and passim.

[30] In spite of the overwhelming size of the forest, it was within the built-up part that the peculiar details of the Owo palace emerge. In this section there were over one hundred courtyards, Ughas, big and small, of which only about seventeen are still intact. About one hundred yards east of the palace, in the section used as the old Owo Divisional Council offices, was Ugha Alamunren, (Alamunren's courtyard).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

As pointed out earlier, Ugha Okunrin, (Men's Courtyard), where the men exercised and wrestled, was about twice the size of a football field and was the largest courtyard. It was also used for the traditional dance of the Olowo, his wives and all chiefs during the annual Ore festival.

Most of the architectural décor of the Owo palace, as was generally found in Yorubaland during our period, was made of terra cotta. Thus, terra cotta sculptures featured prominently in the Olowo's palace. Such sculptures were an integral part of the unique forms of art that went with palace architecture in the precolonial period. These terra cotta sculptures were done in pillars, which might have replaced carved wooden pillars or existed side by side with it. Oftentimes, these sculptures projected from the walls. [31] These sculptures might represent human beings and important animals such as the elephant, lion, leopard and snakes, all of which were regarded as special symbols of the power, authority and wisdom of the Olowo.

A sizeable proportion of each of the animals including some species of snakes when killed by any hunter in the kingdom was brought to the Olowo as his undisputed share. The skin of the lion and leopard, when flayed, also belonged to the king. The tusks of elephants killed by an Elegba, O*de Aperin*, (elephant hunter), were also ceremonially presented to the Olowo whenever these rarities were acquired. Artists saw a close connection between the Olowo and these animals and were inspired to represent them among architectural designs of the palace. Mural drawings and paintings, which added

[31] Some examples can still be found along the verandahs of the Ehin-Ode and Ugha Egwankun in the inner part of the Olowo's palace.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

some brilliance to the buildings, had such special objects frequently represented. Items of furniture, mainly, wooden and beaded, were liberally used. [32]

The Olowo was the principal occupant of the Afin, which in its entirety was meant to provide for his needs and comfort and to preserve him in the privacy and sanctity, which accorded with his divine position. Some of the attributive names of the Olowo portrayed him as the premier occupant of the palace to the extent of associating him inseparably with the palace or ascribing to him the ownership although the qualification of the temporary ownership is understood. [33]

All other residents in the palace were there primarily to minister to the innumerable needs of the Olowo. Among the people resident in the palace were the wives of the Olowo, (including all the bequeathed ones, both old and young). [34] The unrestricted number of wives of the Olowo accounted for the extensive nature of the palace and the fierce competition that usually accompanied the contest leading to the installation of an Olowo.[35] The wives' apartments or Ughas invariably contained kitchens where those of the wives engaged in cooking remained stark naked during the process of cooking the Olowo's meals. In addition, some relatives of the king and his wives resided within the palace. The princes and princesses were allowed to stay in the palace in their youthful days but once they were married, they had to move out.

The male servants of all ranks lived in their own apartments within the palace. Those servants who resided within the palace in Owo were castrated and others made *Ayewase* or *ilari*, with half of their hair removed. Some of the slaves served as *emeses*

[32] See Ojo: 61.
[33] The Olowo of Owo was eulogized as 'Okun Afin, meaning 'The Sea of the palace'.
[34] The number of the Olowo's wives was staggering; Olowo Adedipe is said to have had about two hundred and fifty wives with twice that number of children.
[35] In the Owo palace, the younger wives lived nearer the Olowo while the older wives lived at an increasing distance away according to their ages.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and these appeared naked when running their errands both within the palace grounds and outside. They carried the insignia of the Olowo and people made way for them as they passed by. In spite of their humiliating appearance, they were treated with courtesy and respect as they went about their work. The head of the slaves or *Olori Emese* (*Elemese*), if not castrated, lived outside the palace walls but had to be in the palace at cockcrow and left for his home at dusk. He was expected to be a rich man because of his position in the palace as he was in charge of all the slaves and servants of the Olowo and he was the overseer of all the revenues coming into the palace. [36]

Speaking generally, the emeses were either slaves or descendants of slaves or hostages. Some of the servants were culprits who were reprieved after they had sought refuge in the palace. They were then castrated or mutilated in other ways and made to serve the king. People afflicted with natural deformities such as the lame, the hunchback, the blind, albinos, the deaf and the dumb, all sought refuge and residence in the Olowo's palace. All specimens of deformities could, therefore, be found among the people living in the palace. Other residents were strangers coming to visit the town but with nowhere to live and so repaired to the palace for temporary accommodation. Sometimes, these strangers remained permanently in the palace but lived in a confined section. They were not allowed to venture into the most private and ritually connected sections of the palace. These strangers were not supposed to live in the wing of the palace where the Olowo himself and his wives, lived. Thus the Olowo's palace was a town within a town.

---

[36] 'Eni ti o je Elemese ti ko la, nse ni o mu ori ogun wa si aiye.' Meaning: 'Whoever was made the head of the emeses and did not become rich, must have come into the world with a stone head.' Nowadays, the holder of this position has been overshadowed by the Olubola, a chief who now resides at the Ehin-Ode and performs the functions of the Elemese.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The most talented artists, O*na* or *Olosona*, resided in the palace. These artists produced articles that were very important for the Olowo's regalia and of religious importance. These artists were kept busy in a very secure and private part of the palace where they could produce crowns, garments and other chiefly paraphernalia needed to enhance the prestige of the Olowo. Drummers, trumpeters, flautists were a distinct class of artists who resided, for the day, in the palace.

Whether in eastern or western Yorubaland, the limits to the areas of labor supply for the work on a palace were defined by the boundaries of the kingdom. Hence, the size, quality and upkeep of an afin depended to a considerable extent on the size and extent of the kingdom. In the early part of the 18th century, the kingdom of Owo spread over a large area. It extended as far as Odighiri beyond the Osse River, along the Owo –Benin road, in the southeast. In the northeast, it reached Kabba, now in Kwara state of Nigeria. In the west, it bordered on Igbo Eleyegho, beyond the Ogbese River along the Owo-Akure road. Towards the North West, the river Olugbin, beyond Eporo, was the boundary. Southwestwards, the kingdom stretched to Upafa, beyond Igbatoro and the Ala River, in the direction of Okeluse and Ute. Incidentally, Upafa is still well remembered as the second place where the Olowo and his people settled though temporarily, in their migration from Ile-Ife to Owo. Each settlement within this extensive kingdom had a section of the palace assigned to it for building and maintenance.

According to Ojo, there were two major pools of labor recruited for building purposes.[37] First, the limited class of labor, which was the inner range, meant for meeting immediate and urgent demands, and secondly, the outer range which was designed to meet the wider purposes of large-scale building and repairs in general. The inner range of

[37] Ojo, Yoruba Palaces, op. cit, p... 66.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

labor consisted of the supply from the groups of nine inner circle settlements comprising Owo itself, Ipele, Iyere, Emure-Ile, Isho, Amuren, Upenmen, Isuada and Idashen. The inhabitants of these nearby settlements were usually at the beck and call of the Olowo for the performance of all state duties including repairs to the palace and when necessary, actual building. But they tackled, as a matter of priority, the immediate small-scale work that arose in connection with the maintenance of the palace. The outer range of labor consisted of all the settlements within the kingdom, reaching to its boundaries.

There was a division of labor in doing the work of the palace, with each section of the kingdom assigned specific work connected with erection and maintenance or a particular type of material to be procured when the need arose. Some towns or villages were assigned the task of providing a quantity of rafters, bush ropes or thatching leaves. In each of the dependent townships, e.g. Ifon or Idoani, effective use of labor was achieved through the age grades in the quarters to which each settlement is divided. Whatever the mode of labor, every labor unit had to take part in the building and maintenance of the palace at whatever circumstance. Remuneration was in the form of food and drinks but no pecuniary compensation for the workers. Severe penalties awaited any defaulters who were rare indeed.

There were rules and regulations guiding how people might approach the person of the Olowo and what were prohibited in the palace and the surrounding areas. [38] In the pre-colonial period, the king was not allowed to see the corpse of a human being. Should any one carry a corpse through the palace, such a person was liable to a heavy fine. Burials were not allowed within the palace except that of the Olowo himself. All other

[38] Before entering the palace, a visitor must remove any headgear and footwear. The palace, sacred and awe inspiring, fulfils its religious role of promoting and ensuing the health and prosperity of the kingdom. In this respect it was the living part of the owo kingdom.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

burial or funeral obsequies were prohibited. Nobody must weep or cry within the palace. The use of an umbrella other than the one authorized by the Olowo for the chiefs or the unfolding of same when dancing at the palace grounds was repugnant to native law and custom. The offender was liable to heavy punishment. To take or carry a new yam through the palace when the ceremony for eating new yam had not been performed was an offense punishable with a heavy fine. [39]

No one, even among the princes, was allowed to use the Umoba drums without the king's permission. The offender would be charged with sedition. It was the Olowo and members of the Inner Council who made laws for the kingdom in the period under study.[40] An offender in any part of the kingdom who could escape arrest and was able to make his way to the palace to beg for pardon would be freed of the charge but he automatically became a servant or an *Omode-Owa* to the Olowo. Owo traditions say that the Olowo was a symbol of good among the Owos. The palace, with the Olowo in it, was accepted as a divine place, a sanctuary. Because of that, it was an offense to touch the wall of the palace or to point a finger towards the direction of the afin outside the confines of the palace.

Horses belonging to anybody other than the person of the Olowo were prohibited within the palace grounds. Horses were bred and reared for the king's use in the palace. Specially trained officers, called *ajasin* or *apoko esin*, were charged with the care of the king's horses. The horses were for war and special occasions such as the O*re* and funerals of important personalities involving the *ako* and the O*gho* funeral obsequies.

---

[39] The offender had to pay a fine of two goats, two sheep, fowls and fish, to the 'Aghoro' (priests).
[40] When a law was about to be enforced, the Olowo and his authorized chiefs would tell a bell ringer to proclaim the same at strategic locations within the town. The law would be announced to the hearing of the people. After this was done, the law was in force.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Most of the people seen around the palace were almost total strangers, people who had come to live in the town but needed time to settle down. At any time in the period under discussion, there were always people milling around and doing things at the palace. But any stranger who wanted accommodation in the palace had to live at the strangers' quarter. That part of the afin extended to Oke-Ekusi and was coterminous with Isaipen quarters, where most of the Olowo's reprieved slaves lived. This part of town was on the side of the main gate leading into the capital. The royal wives were usually chosen from local women at Owo. New members of the Igbare and Edibo Olowo ranks were required to present a daughter in marriage to the incumbent Olowo. Owo tradition, however, records a few occasional marriage alliances with a neighboring dynasty. Olowo Elewu-okun's mother, for example, is said to have come from Ikole-Ekiti and he too married a woman from Ikole and the union produced a male offspring who was brought up at Ilu-Omoba and he later became the ruler of Supare in the Akoko country. Adedipe is also said to have married a woman from Ado-Ekiti and the son from the marriage was the first Chief Olugboroko of Igboroko quarter.

No wife of the Olowo was allowed to use a black head tie in the palace. That would indicate mourning and you do not mourn in the Olowo's palace. The Olowo's wives, consorts known as Oloris, had a peculiar way of plaiting their hair. The coiffure was so distinctive that it was very easy to tell them apart by their hair-do. Under no circumstances would anybody give them accommodation outside the palace. [41] If a man were caught having an affair with any of the Olowo's wives, he would be executed with the offending woman. No pregnant woman was allowed to live in the palace or deliver a baby there. Before entering the palace a visitor must remove any headgear and footwear.

[41] Ashara said that woe betide a man who knowingly established an acquaintance with a wife of the Olowo.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Nobody was allowed to cover his or her body above the waist with a wrapper in the palace or when passing in front of the palace. All wrappers were to be tied around the waist while the upper part of the body was left half naked. Women were to tie their wrappers above their breasts. Only the Ighare chiefs were allowed to cover their bodies with an *Ipan Meta* cloth. [42] Because of the sacredness of his person, the Olowo was not allowed to visit any of the big towns or villages under his domain.

The Olowo was prohibited from setting his eyes on the river Ogbese[43] or any part of another kingdom. He must not be absent from the palace at any time as he was not expected to go beyond the walls of the palace. He was not expected to see anybody who desired to have a private audience with him but could only receive very important visitors at the *'Ona Agodo'*, an anteroom to the Ugha Ehin-Ode courtyard (Public Assembly Hall). The person of the Olowo was regarded to be sacred.

The significance of the specialization of courtyards in the Olowo's palace is that the palace was the hub of the kingdom where most of the ritual and social activities performed in the palace demand special kinds of enclosures which were only available in the palace. Some of the courtyards are large, e.g. the Ehin-Ode Courtyard, (Assembly Hall), where a very large space afforded the assembling of a large number of people. The men's courtyard, Ugha Okunrin, is another example; this was the largest courtyard in the palace as it was the size of two football fields. Again the activities carried out in this particular area can only be carried out there and nowhere else. In short, there was specialization in the courtyards because of the nature of the activities carried out in the

[42] The olori Ugbamas use the Igban Meta when going to Amuren before their Ero ceremony.
[43]This law came into force after the assassination of Olowo Alubiolokun at the Ogbese River in c1678. The Olowo was also prohibited from setting his eyes on Omushen and Arigidi squares after the day of his ritual installation in these two sites in Iloro quarter.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Olowo's palace which warranted such specialization. The Ugha Moron, for example, served as the special place in the palace where rituals connected with the worship of the gods of the land were carried out.

The palace symbolized the integrity of the Owo kingdom and its maintenance therefore reflects the integrity and importance of the kingdom. Most of the work done on the palace was carried out by people from the Owo dependencies in Akoko and other areas. A willingness to contribute to the upkeep of the palace symbolized allegiance to the Olowo but refusal indicated rebellion and was punished severely. By working in the palace, the people saw themselves as belonging to something greater than their little settlement or village within the kingdom.

The special rule of conduct about the Olowo and conduct in front of him indicate a high respect for the king because he was the highest authority of the realm. It was a show of respect for the law of the land symbolized by the king.

These rules reflect both the influences of the Edo practice of holding their ruler in the highest esteem. They also reflect the Yoruba veneration of their king under good behavior. While the Benin practice leads to absolutism, the Yoruba practice does not allow for absolutism. In both cases, these rules reflect the high regard Africans have for their rulers as they realize the onerous nature of the office and the responsibilities it carries.

It is important that the Olowo's wives are chosen from certain families in the kingdom because that creates a tie to the throne. A prince, whose mother is an offspring of a particular family in the town, provides a direct link and access for that family in the palace as king. The notion that whoever emerges as king among the princes is a product

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of the ruling class of the realm is another reason. This practice prevents the possibility of an impostor on the throne. It ensures continuity in the line of those who are entitled to rule.

Theoretically, the Olowo had inherent powers that tended to set him apart. In the first place, the sacredness of his office was neither empty nor nominal as he was really regarded by the Owo people as a divinity. His well being was bound up with their own condition. Then he was always the richest man in the kingdom since all tolls at gates and markets were paid to him, as well as various other forms of tribute. He was also the source of honor, able to bestow, (usually within certain families), and in some cases, to withdraw, titles and chieftaincies. With the chiefs, he controlled the use of all land belonging to the kingdom. Though legislative and judicial matters were discussed and decided by his councils, all laws were promulgated in his name, and he was the supreme arbiter in appeals. Military power was not in his hands, since the war chiefs, at various periods, chiefs Sashere, Oshere, Owadogbon and in the last quarter of the 19th century, Ojomo, controlled the army, but the Olowo alone could authorize a campaign. He also had at his disposal a personal bodyguard of household officers and slaves he could order to carry out his orders. If relations with other parties in the town or kingdom were strained the Olowo had many means to exert his influence, though intrigue rather than a display of force was his usual weapon.

Furthermore, the Olowo was the head of the traditional government of Owo kingdom. The incumbent of this position had the power of life and death over his subjects. He had the power to declare war. In doing this, the Olowo would send a commission to the military chiefs to wage war against a certain town or village. He had

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the power to arrest and punishes any offender or order the execution or expulsion of an offender. He had the power to enact, repeal, withdraw or cancel any law he felt repugnant to the custom of the land and to pardon and reprieve any prisoner.

But in reality, these powers were also circumscribed in other ways. There were constitutional provisions, which mandated some chiefs in the kingdom, the authority to counsel the king about his conduct and in extreme cases, terminate his rule. The Inner Council consisted of the fifteen high chiefs, responsible to the king for the proper administration of the kingdom in matters executive, judicial and legislative. The council of chiefs known as Edibo Olowo or Igbema Aleli complemented the court and palace at Owo. This consisted of seven chiefs or councilors: Ojumu, Oshere, Akowa, Ajana, Ojomo (from the 18th century), Elerewe and Sashere, all titles that were hereditary in their families except the Akowa, an additional non-hereditary title. The Ojumu was 'primus inter pares,' as he did not wield any additional power than the rest of the group. In the old days, the Akowa had power and influence which were commonly greater than those of the others put together, but these have been eroded over the years. The position of the Akowa, the head of the Ighare chiefs, made him seem like an oloja, a ruler in his own right, [44]only lesser than the Olowo himself. He represented a group of Owo chiefs, the Ighare, who could make and unmake an Olowo.

The council of chiefs in Owo known as the Igbema Aleli (Inner Council) has become very powerful in recent years after they succeeded in wresting power from the Ighare chiefs of Iloro quarter. This council of high chiefs formed a powerful, usually hereditary cabinet and there were also lesser councils in the surrounding townships for the

[44] Cf. his cognomen: 'A pa ki Olowo to pa,' meaning that the Akowa has authority to celebrate the Igogo festival by killing the sacrificial offering before the Olowo does so himself.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

regulation of the different aspects of government. In view of the inherent powers of the various cadres of chiefs, the Olowo appears to be as much fettered by constitutional procedure as a ruler in a modern democracy.

Thus, at the risk of repetition, the Owo chieftaincies were hereditary within the descent groups or extended families, which made up the population of Owo. The key title holders were: Akowa, Ojumu, Oshere, Ajana, Elerewe, Sashere, and since the later part of the 18th century, the Ojomo, with five of the chiefs [45]heading each of the five quarters to which the town was divided. These chiefs were therefore at once representatives of their family groups as well as being officials of the king and kingdom. It was these restraints, which most sharply distinguished the Yoruba kingdoms from the authoritarian monarchies of, for example, Benin and Dahomey, and from those based on conquest, like the Fulani emirates of northern Nigeria.[46]

Before the onset of British colonial rule in the last decade of the 19th century, two types of administrative structures could be identified in most Yoruba kingdoms. In the first type, power was decentralized: the king (traditional ruler) was a titular head, sharing power with cadres of non-royal chiefs. A good example of this type polity was that of the Oyo kingdom in which the Alafin (ruler) was a nominal (i.e. de jure) head of a conciliar structure, while the chiefs were the real (i.e. de facto) rulers of the realm.[47] The second type administrative structure showed the concentration or centralization of power in the

[45] The Ojumu headed Igboroko quarter, the Akowa headed Iloro quarter, the Osere headed Ehin-Ogbe quarter, the Ajana headed Isaipen quarter and the Ojomo headed Ijebu quarter.
[46] Smith, R. S., Kingdoms of the Yoruba, Methuen, 1969:126
[47] Johnson, S., 1921, 48-70; Fadipe, 1970, pp. 198-242; Forde, 1951, pp. 19-24 and Lloyd. 1954, pp. 366-384

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

hands of the king. Rarely is this found among the Yoruba.[48] While this type polity was rare among the Yoruba, it was very common among their neighbors of Benin in the east[49] and Dahomey in the west.[50] These are kingdoms in which the ruler held absolute sway. [51] To some extent, the Owo political system appears to have combined elements of both types of administrative structures. Which one would be more apparent during any particular reign depended on the character of the incumbent ruler. The case of Owo, therefore, presents a very unique and interesting example of a fused structure of pre-colonial traditional administration exhibiting both a strong absolutist monarchical structure and a conciliar system of administration typical of the other Yoruba polities.

The reasons for her strong absolutist tendencies are twofold: first is Owo's geographical location in the eastern frontier of Yorubaland and her nearness to Benin, factors which have made her gravitate towards the centralized and absolutist form of administration noticeable in Benin. Second is the evolutionary nature of her administrative hierarchy. This is a historical process, which has culminated in the concentration of power in the hands of the Olowo. Apart from the Ighare chiefs, all of the important chieftaincy titles in Owo owed their creation and advancement to the benevolence of the Olowos as has been shown earlier. However, the conciliar factor

[48] An exception to this may be the small state of Idaisa located in the transition zone between Yorubaland and Dahomey. For this see Adediran, 'Biodun, 'The Structure of Administration of Precolonial Idaisa,' Anthropos, 79, 1984: 55-63.
[49] Egharevba, 1934; Bradbury, 1967; Ryder, 1969; Igbafe, 1976, op. cit.
[50] Argyle, W. J., The Fon of Dahomey: A History and Ethnography of the old kingdom, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966: v1-210, (Oxford Monographs on Social Anthropology); Akinjogbin, I. A., Dahomey and its Neighbors, 1708-1818. Cambridge: University Press, 1967, op. cit.
[51] Lloyd, P.C., The Political Development of Yoruba Kingdoms in the 18th and 19th centuries, London, 1971: 2.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

remains strong because of reasons inherent in the political development of the Yoruba culture area.[52]

Most of the literatures of European imperialism in Africa characterize all traditional African governments as autocratic and barbarously oppressive. Such characterization is untrue of the typical Yoruba system of government. At bottom, Yoruba political system rested on an acknowledgement of the sovereignty of the people, and a respect by rulers for their subjects. Consequently, the Yoruba system vested in the people the right to choose their rulers and the right to be involved in the decision making process.

The Yoruba people lived in small kingdoms which shared the Yoruba homeland. Among them, each of these little kingdoms comprised a central town (or king's town) and a number of other towns and villages. The king or Oba, ruler of the whole kingdom, lived in the king's city in a large palace. A subordinate ruler, called Baale, ruled each of the subordinate towns and villages, and acknowledged the suzerainty of the king. Every town was divided into quarters, each under a quarter chief. Each quarter was made up of many large family compounds each of which housed many nuclear families (a nuclear family being a man and his wife or wives and their children) all of which claimed descent from one ancestor. [53] The family compound was where all the Yoruba people lived, and it was the lowest level of their traditional system of government. Every family compound had its own internal government. The family head usually, the oldest living male

---

[52] Ll oyd, P. C., 'The Political Development of Yoruba Kingdoms in the 18th and 19th centuries,' Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Occasional Paper, # 31, London, 1971.

[53] Ethnologists call the inhabitants of each family compound a "lineage." In this work, we will call them a "family group" – that is, a group consisting of many nuclear families related by blood. See Lloyd, P. C., 'The Yoruba Lineage,' Africa, 25, 1955: 235-51

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

member, was the leader of this compound government. All meetings of the family group were held under his chairmanship.

The family group, settled disputes within its compound. The family group's properties included, in the town, its compound and, beyond the town walls, its farmland. Members were free to use any parts of the group farmland, but no member had the right to alienate parts of the group's farmland, no member could sell or give any part of it away. Permission to outsiders could only be given by the family group in its meetings. The group wielded much authority over the conduct of its members and provided support for members in need. Finally, if a family group happened to hold a chieftaincy title in the kingdom, such title was hereditary within the group. At the death of a holder of the title, the family group had to select his successor from among their members, and then the authorities of the kingdom would vest him with the title. All these activities meant that the family group held regular group meetings.

The democratic character of Yoruba political system grew upwards from this family group base. In its meetings and decision –making processes, the family group always took great care to involve all its segments. It was an important responsibility of the leadership, not only to allow but also to encourage everybody to express opinion. The group consciously involved its young ones in its activities, [54] and conceived of its dead as continuing to participate in its affairs. All members of a group, including the women married into the group, enjoyed freedom and confidence to speak in all affairs of the group.

[54] The Yoruba have a saying that a shrine, which does not regularly have children attend its rituals, will perish.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In the wider society of a town or village, the individual's membership of a family group guaranteed for him protection against abuse and disrespect. In the quarter, the Quarter Chief consulted with the leadership of the family groups regularly. Even the king's government in the palace did the same.

In general, the powers of the Yoruba king were limited. Theoretically, the Yoruba would say that their kings had power of life and death over their subjects, and that the king was owner of all land. In practice, however, the Yoruba system was a monarchy limited by powerful institutions and rules.

In most Yoruba kingdoms, there existed a secret, powerful cult of elders and notables called Ogboni, which exercised much influence over kings and chiefs. The Ogboni cult was not known to be present in the Owo system before the 20th century. But there were other comparable secret organizations such as the Ogho cult. [55] Parallel and overlapping with all the bodies concerned with the governance of the kingdom were associations of chiefs concerned with particular aspects of government and daily life, especially the conduct of war, of trade and of hunting. There were no parakoyi chiefs in Owo but each chief had his own band of traders while the hunters, who in war acted as scouts for the main army, were grouped together.

Chieftaincy titles, [56] constituted the instruments of governance in Owo kingdom. The chiefs bearing the titles were grouped in *Otus.*[57] There were at least six groups of

[55] One tradition says that there was a secret order known as 'Udi' where decisions affecting the welfare of Owo kingdom were discussed and that members of this order wielded both religious and political sanctions and sanctioned the king's rule by mediating between palace officials and the Edibo Olowo chiefs and the Ighare chiefs but those interviewed on this point will not confirm or deny it.

[56] The three categories of chieftaincy titles: 'Edibo Olowo' (i.e. members of the Inner Council; 'Ojoye' chiefs, (i.e. chiefs installed in the Olowo's palace); and unrecognized chiefs, (Edibo aleli chiefs, e.g. Edibo aleli Oludasa; such chiefs were not recognized in the Olowo's court)

[57] An otu was a class or group of chiefs of similar background and living in same or contiguous quarters

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

titleholders or otus in pre-colonial Owo kingdom. The following are the major ranks of titleholders. First, was the group of village heads, consisting of the Asuada, the Atiba,[58] the Ayere, (head of the Oliyere ranks), the Alale, the Elemure, the Oloba and the Olupenmen who were members of the inner circle settlements and who together with the Inner Council chiefs, formed the council of state of Owo kingdom. [59] Then, the twelve Iloro senior chiefs who left Ile-Ife with Ojugbelu. [60] They remained a distinct group to our times. The Akowa whose title rotated among the Iloro group of chiefs headed this group. The twelve Iloro chiefs were (Olisa-Ogho),[61] Adafin, Arogho, Alajagho, Inonren, Alagha, Okipe, Irangun, Orogun, Erelogho, Oderedere, Ojomojama and Adanigbo.[62] The third group was the royals, *Omolowos*: this group consisted of the sons of past Olowos who were invested by their respective fathers as important chiefs in the kingdom. This group came into prominence in the 19th century and almost eclipsed the other groups. They continue to wield enormous influence in Owo affairs to the present day. [63]

The other group of royals belonged to the Iken group.[64] These were sons of the Olowo Elewu-Okun and those of his brother, Ojomo Oludipe. These titles were created in

---

[58] But lately, the Olupele of Ipele

[59] Ashara says that this group of inner circle settlements was initiated by Imade and cemented by the subsequent Olowos from the time of Renrengenjen and maintained, for example, by Ogeja, Omasan and Omaro.

[60] Alias Omolaghaiye, Asunlola or Arere.

[61] The Olisagho was not an original member of the Ighare group. The first Olisagho was Osho Olude-okun, a servant of the Elefene of Efene. He betrayed his master and was rewarded with the chieftaincy title of Olisagho. This title is one of the oldest titles created shortly after the arrival of the Owos (the Oduduwa group) at their present site.

[62] Other members of this order included Asaba, Asaghe, Odofogho, Odolofin, Odogun, Aro, Sagho and. Alamunren

[63] Among this group were the Aralepo, Ekongba, Oludasa (Omakogbe), Ojigbo, Oludaiye, Modongho, Osunla, Adafin Ewu, Adafin Ajibuwa, Adafin Ajogbo, Adanigbo Akarakiri, Owabumaiye, Usikaiye, Ajegunma (Egbelogho), Owagboriaiye, Owajalaiye, etc. They numbered twenty-two when they were created by Olowo Adedipe Elewu-Okun in c1810.

[64] The Iloro chiefs and the Iken interred the remains of a dead Olowo. Custom demands that the head of the corpse be severed from the body, the tongue, the instrument used in giving command called 'ohun', voice, of the oba was then removed and mixed with other objects for the next Olowo.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the 19th century to assuage the anger and frustration of the other sons of the royal family who were not elevated to the ranks of the Omolowos. [65]

The Oshowe and the Aghoro group: this group included the senior royal doctor and diviners and worshippers of the king's ancestors and recorders of the names and achievements of departed Olowos. This group, headed by the Ajana, included the Oshorun-Ode, the Alaja, and some of the priests of Oronsen. They were in charge of the sacred shrines

Another important group was made up of the *Ona*, Artists: chief Akensogwa-oyen, the royal crown maker headed this group, detailed to prepare the royal regalia. He repaired and mended the royal wardrobe and other paraphernalia of the Olowo. The royal pipe and flute players, (*afunfere*), custodians of the Olowo's regalia and wardrobes. Chief Elerewe headed this group as he was concerned with the dressing of Olowo for the Igogo and Ore. The house servants, *ayewase. Emeses*: headed by the *Elemese* (the head of the king's sword bearers, *emada).* They were also the commissioners of the land, the police and the town criers, who announced the new laws and broadcast the news of the day.

By the end of the 19th century, Owo kingdom was administered through the various cadres of chiefs grouped under the term 'Otu.' Ashara says that following the introduction of new chieftaincies, the high chiefs, that is, the Edibo Olowo chiefs, came into being.[66] Even then the Ighare chiefs continued to administer the government of Owo according to tradition. But the newly created high chiefs gradually took over control of the affairs of the kingdom, so that by the later part of the 19th century, the Ighares had

[65] These titles included those of Arala, Inenren, Ogwasoyen, Oghore, Salokun, Sama, Samarogho, Olatide, Obadamisoro, Obatinoadeyo, Olugbade, Olusanmokun, Oyewola, Obanoyen, Olubola, Ajinfuwa, Obanigba, Abiola, and Ademokunle.

[66]The Ighare chiefs and the newly created chiefs constituted the ranks of the kingmakers for Owo.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

virtually lost their complete control of the affairs of the kingdom. The high chiefs then became the leaders of the 'Otus,' sets into which the new chiefs were divided.

Theoretically, the first and foremost *Otu* in Owo was the *Otu* Ighare chiefs of Iloro headed by the Akowa. But, as said earlier, primacy has now been given to chief Ojumu's otu, (*otu Ojumu*) made up of the high chiefs, leaders of the other otus. Thus the *Otu* Ojumu, consists of the heads of the *Otu* Sashere, Otu Oshere, etc, and the *Otu* Aragbagbaiyes. These have come to replace the *Otu* Ighares, as the foremost echelons of the realm. The heads of the senior *Otus* (groups) were the seven high-ranking chiefs who now formed the Inner Council.[67] The head chiefs of the satellite townships, villages, compound (agbo-ile) and quarter (adugbo) heads formed part of the council. They made necessary by-laws and decided all local matters in their townships. Each of the towns situated beyond the boundaries of the capital had a permanent head in the court at Owo through whom a link with the king was maintained.

The drummers, the flutists and the trumpeters played a prominent part in the early morning and evening ceremonies in the palace. Because of their importance, these artists stay indefinitely at the palace and some of them lived on the palace grounds and became officers of the crown. The talking drum and trumpets often drew the attention of the public to the palace. The palace was the hub of the kingdom and the cacophony of noises from drums and other instruments make the palace to be in a state of carnival most of the time.

---

[67] Besides these chiefs, there are other groups of chiefs in the other groups, e.g. the *Otu* Iken, *Otu* Arala, *Otu* Inenren, *Otu* Ogwasoyen, *Otu* Oghore, *Otu* Salokun, *Otu* Ajase, *Otu* Sama, *Otu* Obadamisoro, and *Otu* Obanoyen. All these *Otus* (Groups) had judicial authority in civil and criminal matters in their respective quarters and sub quarters. Additionally, there are other groups, such as, the *Otu* Oyekan, *Otu* Alaraye, *Otu* Olusanmokun, *Otu* Olabode, *Otu* Obatinuadeyo, *Otu* Olugbade, *Otu* Oyewola, *Otu* Owagboriaye, *Otu* Olubola, *Otu* Ajinfuwa, *Otu* Obanigba, *Otu* Abiola, and *Otu* Ademokunle, who also took part in the government of the kingdom.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Unlike in the other Yoruba kingdoms, there was no specific provision for women in the government of Owo. However, that does not mean that women did not participate in the affairs of the kingdom. The *Olopate ogun*, meat sellers, in the market, were women. The men killed the games but gave them to their wives to sell in the market. Such meat was made available to the *Olopate ogun* who were the professional butchers, sellers and preservers of meat. The meat sellers' guild was a strong women's group in Owo and through them market women participated in the decision making process.

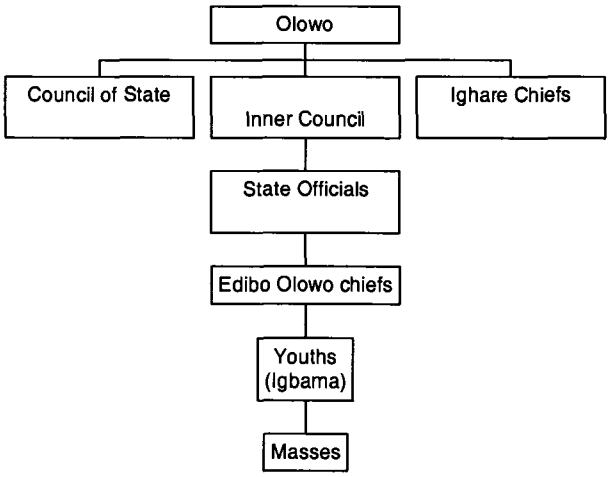
Although there were no Iyalode or women chiefs in the kingdom, women took prominent roles in championing the cause of their husbands, brothers or fathers during chieftaincy tussles in Owo. Women were very important in the celebration of the Ero ceremony and a daughter had to present to her father, celebrating the Ero, the ritual cloth, U*gbero, (girijo)* used for the Ero celebration. Women also participated in the social affairs of Owo in other ways. For example, they have their own musical ensemble called Esa, which entertained people during important burial ceremonies. In religious affairs, women led the worship of some of the gods of Owo. Many women were made *Yeye Olorisa*, 'mother worshipping the gods,' or prophetess.

Over land, the Olowo's power was very limited. He was only the custodian of Owo communal land, not its owner. He held no absolute power to dispose of the land, which in practice he held in trust for the community. The Olowo was the overlord and the final authority in the community. However, the existence of the high ranking chiefs, members of the Inner Council, all from the five quarters of the township, constituted a restraining hold on the powers of the Olowo. The heads of the eight wards or districts into which the remaining towns and villages of Owo are divided, also constituted a restraining factor to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the absolutist tendencies of an Olowo. These institutions helped the Olowo to administer the kingdom. Under these quarters and districts are street heads. The compound and the family heads constituted the lowest rung of the hierarchical ladder of Administration in Owo.

The following is a diagrammatic representation of the traditional administration of Owo kingdom and district:



The duties of the Inner Council members and district heads were to protect the interests of the people under their individual authority and jurisdiction and settle disputes among individuals within their respective domains with the help of their subordinates, street, compound and family chiefs. In return the youth of the quarter or district called the 'Ugbama' are responsible for constructing the chiefs' houses and doing communal labor occasionally in their farms.

Small disputes were attended to in the family group. More serious problems went to the Quarter Chiefs. Serious cases such as highway robbery, murder and the like as well as final appeals were settled by the Olowo-in–Council, The Olowo's court was the final court of appeal.

Some chiefs at the center were links between rulers of the subordinate towns and the king's government. Some towns acquired by conquest were tributary and subject to the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

authority of the Olowo. The king's inner council chiefs. were each responsible for different parts of the kingdom. Thus some senior chiefs at Owo were appointed to act as liaisons with the outlying villages and to act as hosts to strangers from various towns outside the area. [68] The Ojumu dealt with Idashen, Emure-ile and Isho and all those from Idanre. The Ojomo dealt with Ipele; the Ajana with Iyere and the Sashere with Isuada and Upenmen and Asaba (Akowa) dealt with Ikare and other Akoko towns and villages. Idoani, Idogun, Afo and Ute brought yearly tributes to the Olowo at the annual Ore festival.[69] These villages assisted Owo in her wars. All tributes to the Olowo were said to have been made by the villages through their respective liaison chiefs, who were allowed to keep a portion of it for themselves.

The Egbe or Igbama (i.e. age- grade associations) was a very important aspect of the social organization of Owo community. The title system seems to be interlocking with a system of age grades. The youths were grouped into grades, which were called *Egbe.* [70] The Yoruba, with the exception of the Ekiti and Owo, do not have institutionalized age grades. [71] It is probable, that the system of age grade was borrowed from the Edo area because of these two Yoruba sub-groups' contact and interaction with the Edo groups their neighbors at their location in the frontier of Yoruba land. Beeley says that there were usually five or six but, in actual fact, it could be up to nine. [72] Young boys belonged to the *otu ogwere*, a grade which then prepared them for membership in the *Egbe* proper.

---

[68] For example, the Ojumu was to host any visitor from Idanre in his compound for as long as they were at Owo.
[69] Beeley, 'Intelligence Report,' para. 42.
[70] While both Beeley and Talbot say that the word 'egbe' is a Bini word for 'family,' it is also a Yoruba word for an 'association,' 'club' or 'society.' Abraham, R. C., Dictionary of Modern Yoruba, London University Press, and 1970: 185.
[71] See Fadipe, N.A., The Sociology of the Yoruba, 1970: 132.
[72] Beeley, 'Intelligence Report,' para. 105. In recent years, however, it had become rare to find these many; only two are now identifiable.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The main two *Egbe* performed communal labor such as the preparation and the maintenance of roads, work on the palace and maintenance of other public buildings. These two senior *'Egbe'* (the *Igbama* and the *Ekeji Igbama*) provided military forces and in some places acted as policemen. These were collectively known as the *Igbama.*[73]

The *Ighele* or *Abiroro* were those who had graduated from the senior *Egbe* or *Igbama* by celebrating the Ero ceremony but had failed to take a title, while those who had taken titles were elders and were known as *Ighare chiefs.*[74]

Despite its hierarchical character, Owo society was in practice surprisingly democratic. Distinctions of rank and wealth were offset by the obligations and benefits of the family and by common ownership of the land; opportunities to acquire high office and wealth were many, and no freeman was without a protector among the chiefs.

In Owo kingdom, the various quarter and subquarter chiefs were answerable to the Olowo. In the villages, 'ereko,' the chiefs were answerable to the village head whose title normally reflected his headship of the village formed by adding the possessive prefix 'Olu,' or 'Oni,' to the name of the village. For example, the ruler of Upenmen was the

[73] Talbot and Butcher both say that Igbama is the middle age grade among the Ishan or Esan. Talbot, Southern Nigeria, V. 3, p. 547; Butcher, 1935:51. Butcher, H.L.M. 'Some Aspects of the Otu system of the Isa (Esan) Sub-tribes of the Edo-speaking People of Southern Nigeria,' Africa, 8, 1935: 147-62. Chief Sashere of Igboroko quarter issued orders to all the *Egbe* groups of Owo kingdom in times of distress such as when the kingdom was under attack by enemy forces or under internal insurrection.

[74] The Ero festival was performed every fifth or ninth year (following the celebration by an Olowo) and exempts a man from communal labor obligations and serves as an initiation rite for eldership in Owo society. The term Ighare applied only to the chiefs of Iloro quarter in Owo kingdom. Title taking was not tied to the age grade system. A man might purchase a title or inherit one while still in an age grade. Talbot reported five companies in Owo, the Ileru, the Ndebumor, the Ijamija, the Okor, and the Omoregwa. These terms are now moribund in Owo as nobody uses them any more if they were ever used in the past. The term Ijamija refers to the name of masquerades that young men perform. According to Talbot, once in every five years, the people of each *egbe* moved up the ladder of progression towards the Ero celebration. Ashara says, however, that entrance into age grade groups occurs every eight years in Owo. That too is erroneous.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Olupenmen. Sometimes the title was unrelated to the village and these titles were usually but not always said to have come from Ife or Benin with the ruling family.[75]

In the area of defense and the nature of the military organization of Owo, the following are those chiefs (besides the Olowos) who led Owo contingents to the battle field and led in person as Commanders- in- Chief: the Sashere (Generalissimo); Oshere (Commander- General); Ojomo (General and Commander of Ijebu forces); Owadogbon (Balogun); the Imanran (Lieutenant). During battles, spears (*Oko)* bows and arrows (*apo* and *oron*) were the chief weapons of warfare. *Akatampo* was also used. Most of the people used cutlasses and machetes. Apart from the above, the nature of the military was not much different from the military of the other Yoruba people to the west.[76] It was basically a mass levy in which the chiefs took command and the Igbama or youths carry out the fighting. The Iloro youths were more militant than those of the other quarters because of their youthfulness when in training for the Ero celebration. They were usually only slightly above middle age when they perform their Ero, whereas the other Ero celebrants in the other quarters were much older.

In contrast to the other Yoruba polities to the west, however, there was no division of the chiefs into the war and civil wings as both functions were fused in the chieftaincy titles in Owo because the kingdom was always on combat alert, prepared and ready for attack from her neighbors particularly the Benin kingdom.

As a result of the location of Owo on the frontier of Yorubaland and her proximity to the kingdom of Benin, she found herself at the crossroads of influences coming from the main Yoruba heartland (particularly Ife and the Oyo Empire) on the one hand and from

[75] The ruler of Ipele, the Atiba of Ipele, (now the Olupele) is a good example, Beeley, Intelligence Report. ibid. para 98 and 102.
[76] J.F. Ajayi & R.S.Smith, Yoruba Warfare in the 19th Century, Cambridge, 1970.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the kingdom of Benin on the other. It is therefore not surprising to observe some features and tendencies belonging to the two polar cultural extremes in the political and social culture of Owo. The Owo system developed as a sort of a hybrid of the two, peculiarly suitable for the location of Owo at the frontier. This is where the genius of Owo is revealed.

The Benin king was almost all powerful. He could create chieftaincies, and thus increase his influence and power at will. He had complete control over Edo villages and was born, not selected by his chiefs. A contributing factor to this was the Edo social structure and settlement pattern. The Edo was not as urbanized as the Yoruba. Their typical settlements were small villages – easy to control. This is unlike the Yoruba who loved large towns. Each Yoruba kingdom was made up of a capital city, sub-ordinate cities and towns and villages. For example, Owo kingdom was made up of the city of Owo but there are also substantial towns like Ifon, Idoani and Okeluse, etc. The Yoruba system was more flexible, featured powers of the central chiefs and easy on subordinate towns and villages.

In conclusion, the peculiarity of the Owo system is its fusion of the main Yoruba and the Edo systems of government. A cursory look at Owo's political and social institutions reveals a very close connection between Owo and the Benin and Edo –speaking areas. Some of the chieftaincy titles of Owo, for example, Osere, Sashere, Ologbosere, Ero, Aro, Ariyo, Aribo, Owadogbon, Ogwaduge, Uwangwe have their counterparts in the Benin kingdom in Esere, Iyase, Ologbosere, Ero, Eriyo, Eribo, Obayagbona, Obaduwage and Uwangue respectively. Place names in Owo such as Ushelu, Ushama, and Ijebu are all terms that are replicated in Benin as Ushelu, Ushama, Uzebu, etc. It is not clear which

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

place copied from the other as institutions are replicated among the various polities in the area. Some of these are also found replicated in the other parts of Eastern Yoruba area. For example, the title of Ologbosere is also found in Ondo. The title of Olisa appears in Owo and in Benin. In both places, it is the Oliha or Olisa, who crowns the king. Thus, in both Benin and Owo, the political and cultural role of the incumbent of this title was important and similar.[77]

[77] An Owo/Benin terminological correspondence is provided in Appendix 6.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER TEN

Owo under British Rule and in Independent Nigeria to 1970

The process of the re-incorporation of Owo kingdom into the mainstream Yoruba politics continued and intensified in the 20th century. This chapter presents a summary of political developments in Yorubaland and Nigeria with a particular focus on the Owo kingdom under British rule and following Nigeria's independence, up to 1970.

The history of British colonization of what is present day Nigeria, from the 19th century to independence in 1960, reveals that the Owo kingdom, like other Yoruba kingdoms and the Benin kingdom, responded to the British in ways consistent with their prior development in politics, trade, arts and culture. While the British succeeded in subjugating these kingdoms, and significantly altering certain aspects of their internal politics, Owo's character and uniqueness remained largely intact. Owo's frontier character and unique political culture continued while also adjusting to changes brought about by the new esoteric and foreign political, social and economic innovations and experiences. This section of the narrative addresses the challenges Owo faced from British rule, and its responses. [1]

Both under British rule (1900-1960) and in independent Nigeria, the political life of Owo kingdom has been characterized by almost continual turbulence. Part of this was generated by the ignorance, ineptitude and arrogance of British administrators in charge of Owo, and part the result of a carry-over of Owo's traditionally tortuous and tumultuous politics. The Owo kingdom started out, as part of British–ruled Nigeria, in a

[1] I stopped the history of Owo at 1970 because that was the year the Ojomo title was restored and Owo was once again united as one polity thus achieving some form historical continuity after the colonial interlude.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

cloud of uncertainty and confusion because the British were unsure where Owo should belong in the internal administrative demarcations of Nigeria. Then the British provoked sharp reactions by interfering in the traditional processes of selection of Owo's kings, by instituting unpopular taxation, and by uninformed handling of Owo's relationship with the Akoko country. As if these troubles were not enough, the traditional conflicts between the Olowo and the Ojomo institutions flared up again, its conflagration raging into the tangled web of Nigerian party politics both before and after Nigeria's independence. The consequences of all these were popular revolts against the British administration, mass riots, arrests, trials and convictions (including the trial, conviction and banishment of an Olowo), official investigations, government declarations and reversals thereof. The political instability characteristic of centuries of Owo's history did not go away even at the end of the 20th century.

The establishment of British rule over Nigeria was accomplished from three different directions, advanced by three different initiatives. All three had their convergence in Owo as a result of her frontier location in the periphery of Yorubaland and her nearness to the Benin kingdom. British interventions in the wars in Yorubaland in 1886 brought those wars all to an end in 1893.[2] The end result was that the British administration based in Lagos proclaimed a protectorate over Yorubaland - the colony and Protectorate of Lagos.[3] British invasion of the Benin kingdom in 1897 ended in the British conquest of that kingdom and its inclusion in a Niger Coast Protectorate.[4] In 1900, the British

[2] Akintoye, Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1877-1893, Longman, 1971
[3] Akintoye, Revolution; Atanda, J. A. The New Oyo Empire: British Colonial Rule and Change in Yorubaland, Longman, 1973, Chapter One.
[4] Ryder, A. F. C., Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897, Longman, 1969; Igbafe, Phillip Aigbona, Benin Under British Administration: The Impact of Colonial Rule on a West African Kingdom, 1897-1938, Atlantic Highlands, NJ Humanities Press, 1979.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

government terminated the charter of the Royal Niger Company and officially took over the Niger Valley and the territories to the north- hence, the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria.[5]

As a Yoruba kingdom, Owo was first regarded as part of the Lagos Protectorate. But soon after the conquest of Benin City by the British in 1897, Owo was regarded as a province of the Benin kingdom and treated as part of the Niger Coast Protectorate.[6] From 1900, the Akoko territory was included in the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, having been under the rule of the Royal Niger Company as a result of the latter's conquest of the Nupe, the ruling power of Akoko in the 1890s.[7] Thus, Owo probably suffered more than any other Yoruba kingdom from British ignorance about the country and peoples of Nigeria. In 1906, the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos was amalgamated with the Niger Coast Protectorate to form a new Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. And in 1914, the Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated to constitute Nigeria.

The relationship of the rulers of the Owo kingdom with the British went sour from the beginning. The first step to give Owo some direct local administration took place when the Owo kingdom was constituted into an administrative district with the name of Ifon District, with its headquarters not in Owo city but in Ifon, a subordinate town some twenty-six miles from Owo.[8] One would expect that the British, with their predilection for doing things according to traditional practices and precedents, would follow the historical administrative system in Owo kingdom before their arrival.[9] The need for the Olowo and his chiefs to travel to Ifon for administrative purposes was viewed with sullen

---

[5] Flint, J.E., Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria, Oxford, 1960. Falola, History of Nigeria, 2005.
[6] Igbafe, Benin Under British Administration, 58.
[7] Flint; Sir George Goldie, Akintoye, Revolution and Power, and Akomolafe, 'Akoko under British Rule'.
[8] Beeley, J. H., Intelligence Report, 1934, para. 5, p. 7
[9] The Divisional headquarters of Owo did not return to Owo town until 1925, twenty –eight years later.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

discontent in Owo.[10] The disenchantment deepened when the District Commissioner, Mr. Reginald D.N. Raikes, in his first act in that office, demanded of the Olowo Atanleye that all persons owning slaves in the Owo kingdom should set them free immediately.[11] Owo people received this demand with total shock. In fact, the fighting men and their commanding chiefs mobilized, ready to defend their city, and waited for the Olowo to declare war. The Olowo, however, remembering how the British had stormed Benin City and humiliated the Benin king, refused to declare war.[12] The tension, therefore, slowly subsided and the slaves were set free.

Owo people had hardly recovered from this shock when in 1901 the District Commissioner, Raikes, summoned the Olowo to Ifon. Attended by his leading chiefs, the Olowo Atanleye went to Ifon. Then, on his way back, the king sustained an accident which led to his death some time later. And, to make matters even worse, when the Owo people proceeded to select a new Olowo, the District Commissioner, Nupier Raikes, apparently believing that he knew what was best for his African subjects, embarked upon clumsy attempts to influence their choice. Of the two leading candidates, the Omolowos preferred Ogunoye, and thought that Olagbegi, the son of the immediate past Olowo Atanleye, was too young - he was only nineteen years old! But Mr. Raikes waded in strongly in support of Olagbegi. However, the chiefs rebuffed the District Commissioner and installed Ogunoye.

---

[10] Chief Adafin Fayemiwo, personal communications, 1968. Owo traditions say that this is attributable to the influence of one Adeluwoye of Ifon, the interpreter for the British, who maintained that Owo was under Ifon in the pre-colonial period.

[11] NAI: Gwan, L. C., A preliminary Inventory of the Administrative records assembled from Ondo Province, Ibadan, 1963:49, 59. Alaluwoye, the interpreter from Ifon, made it sound like it was an utmost urgent matter, like the unchanging laws of the Persians and Medes. Chief Adafin Fayemiwo, oral tradition.

[12] Chief Adafin Fayemiwo, oral tradition

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

But Mr. Raikes would not give up. He turned himself into a promoter and mentor of Olagbegi and made repeated attempts to make Olagbegi get some schooling in order to prepare himself for the throne, and his successors as District Commissioner followed suit.[13] But all they succeeded in doing was to make Olagbegi deeply unpopular with the chiefs.[14] Not surprisingly, therefore, soon after Ogunoye's installation, some leading chiefs made the allegation that Olagbegi's mother, Ameri Fabolaku, had removed some royal regalia from the palace during the time of the selection contest, hoping that her son would win, and that after the selection was concluded she refused to return the regalia.[15] These were very serious allegations. It was a very serious crime for any citizen to remove anything from the palace after an Olowo's death; and it was taboo for a royal wife to interfere in the selection or reign of her son as king. Olagbegi and his mother were in for very serious trouble. Again, the District Commissioner, Raikes, stepped forth to the defense of Olagbegi and his mother - and then he sent Olagbegi away to go and get some schooling, first to Calabar for one year and later to Benin for six months.[16] Since the new Olowo, Ogunoye, was quite advanced in age, Mr. Raikes did not hide the fact that he was preparing Olagbegi for the throne after Ogunoye.

It was an unbelievable amount of interference in the affairs of the Owo kingdom, and the Owo people watched it with incredulity. Their only consolation was their belief that the Whiteman's rule over them was bound to pass away soon. They did not know that British rule had come to stay.

---

[13] Chief Adafin Daramola, the Akowa of Iloro, 1962-1968

[14] Ashara, The History

[15] Ashara, The History, 156, Chief Adafin Fayemiwo, Elerewe Ojo Olakunori, oral traditions. Olagbegi was sent to the Hope Waddell Institute, Calabar, but returned after one year, complaining that the place was too far from home and that his wives were made objects of ridicule by the teachers. He was then sent to Benin where he spent only six months and ran back, refusing to go back. He never learnt to read or write. Ashara, p. 139

[16] Pa Sumanu Arobo, Olori -Ebi Sashare compound, 1985

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ogunoye had pursued a quiet existence all his life.[17] Owo traditions say that he made a great impression on the Owo people upon his accession. A little over seventy years in age, Ogunoye promised to rule in consultation with the high chiefs and the sanction of the Ighare chiefs. The British administration was just taking off at the point of his accession and he was willing to cooperate with the colonial officials. Everything pointed to a great reign.

But against all expectations, Ogunoye's reign was a time of much strife, famine and troubles. It was a period of unrest worsened by distasteful demands from the British administration. The British administration disrupted the traditional relationship between Owo and her subordinate settlements in Ifon and Akoko and seemed bent on destroying the kingdom.

In 1903, the British colonial Government established an elementary school in Owo. The new Owo Government School admitted many male children from the surrounding towns and villages in addition to those from Owo city.[18] In course of time, a Native Court, under British administration, was also established. The Post Office was built at the Oju-Ogwa not far from the School. Under Olowo Ogunoye, good roads were made, linking every part of Owo and districts. Ogunoye also awarded three rows of beads to his high chiefs such as the Ojumu, Ajana, Oshere, Sashere and Elerewe. [19] In 1911, Ogunoye, like his father, Adedipe before him, conferred chieftaincy titles on all his sons.[20]

---

[17] Because of that, when he became the Olowo, he was dubbed Olowo 'Ase bi o ti mo,' meaning 'The Olowo who knows his bounds.' Madam Eunice Tinuade Olugbadehan, oral traditions, 1999.
[18] Ashara, The History
[19] Chiefs Ojomo and Owadogbon retain their four rows of beads.
[20] In c1911, one of the sons of Oba Ogunoye made Chief Obayoriade - Joseph Adekola at age 3 - in 1968 became Olowo Ogunoye II following the deposition of Sir Olateru Olagbegi.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In 1913, Olagbegi at thirty, laid claim to the crown following the death of his uncle, Ogunoye 1. But other contestants, including many older princes, also signified their interest in the vacant stool. Mr. N.B. Gray, the new District Commissioner, who had been instructed by Raikes through the handing over notes that Olagbegi be made the next Olowo, backed Olagbegi to the hilt. In the midst of strong protest from some of the Omolowos, who claimed that if prince Olagbegi were appointed, he would be chosen out of turn and that Okenbaloye, another uncle and a son of Adedipe Elewu-okun, who had been chosen by the Ifa oracle consulted by the Omolowos under the guidance of the head of the group, chief Ojomo Oyigun (Oligbogi), was preferred. The thinking of the Owo people was that Okenbaloye was older than Olagbegi and he should be installed the next Olowo.

It was customary that a successful candidate for Olowo be presented to the kingmakers by the head of the Omolowos. If Owo custom had been followed, Okenbaloye would have been presented. But that would have created a problem for Gray, the British official in Owo, who had wanted to make Olagbegi the next king. To circumvent the traditional process, Gray announced that if the traditional procedure were followed, there would be chaos and pandemonium in Owo. He then bluntly told the Omolowos and the kingmakers that he would not entertain any disturbance of the peace and at that point, every thing was left in abeyance.

Meanwhile, in order to get Olagbegi to the throne, the British administrator got the support of some of the kingmakers, the Edibo Olowo Chiefs, and caused a division among the ranks of the Omolowos by getting a few of them to switch their support. At a meeting of the Omolowos, the few members who supported Olagbegi selected him as

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

their candidate and presented him to the members of the Inner Council, the kingmakers, that is, the high chiefs, who in turn, carried out the order of the British officials and compelled the Olisagho and a few Ighare chiefs to carry out some of the rites relating to the crowning of Olagbegi. At the same time, the same process was being undergone publicly by prince Okenbaloye, who soon moved to Ushama, as custom demanded. When the British authorities heard of Okenbaloye's move, they sent for him and told him to leave the site immediately or he would be arrested. [21]

When the people of Owo heard of this travesty, the action that followed was swift and wide ranging. There were riots by the supporters of Okenbaloye, who was seen as a victim of the manipulation of the British administration and some of the high chiefs, particularly, the young literate chiefs - Ojumu Fadowole and the Sashere, George Adetula. Most people believed that Okenbaloye was the legitimate and successful candidate for the throne. Because of the riots, all the public rites connected with the installation of the Olowo were cancelled. But the secret ceremonies were presided over by the British officials for the installation of Olagbegi. [22]

It took the British colonial Government two years to put down the rebellion of the people of Owo. On January 1, 1914, Southern Nigeria and Northern Nigeria were amalgamated.[23] In that year, the Ifon District was constituted a Division and the court in the new division was reconstituted as a Native Court Grade 'B' and in 1915, under the Native Courts Ordinance, Chief Ojumu was made president and the Ojomo, vice-

---

[21] Ashara, The History, Chef Adafin Fayemiwo. Prince Okenbaloye went back to his farm at Ijugbere in the Odighiri area where he lived henceforth and later died in obscurity.

[22] The realization that the Bamgbosun had died dawned on the Owo people as such a rape of Owo custom could not have been successfully carried out if the Bamgbosun had not been brutally suppressed by the British colonial authorities in 1897.

[23] Government notice No. 11 of 1915 (Gazette No. 4, vol. 2 of 21st January 1915). See Gwan, Preliminary Inventory, p. 10

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

president of the court. The court dealt with offenses as laid down by the Native Authority Ordinance and the By-laws. It could impose a maximum fine of fifty pounds or two years imprisonment. It could also deal with civil cases whose claim did not exceed fifty pounds. [24]

In 1915, with the British still uncertain of how best to divide the country for administrative purposes, the new Ifon Division was integrated with Ubiaja Division. As far as Owo was concerned, this was the most arbitrary of all the administrative changes the British had made in their grouping of the Yoruba peoples with their non-Yoruba speaking neighbors. Apart from the heterogeneity of the cultures of this assemblage, Owo was further removed from the administrative center and moved among the non - Yoruba speaking peoples of the area. This was as a result of her location near the non Yoruba speaking peoples at the frontier.

In December 1915, after the changes had been settled, the Government, intent on dealing with the riots at Owo, removed Chief Oshorunnaiye, *the Olori Ebi Omolowo,* (the head of the Omolowos), to Ifon, for refusing to nominate Olagbegi and for his failure to support his candidature for Olowo. Chief Oshorunnaiye was accused of leading the riots and the subsequent rebellion against the British Colonial Government in Nigeria.

But this was an unfair treatment of a man who was only exercising his right as an Owo citizen and in his position as the *Olori-Ebi Omolowo, (Head of the Omolowos).* The man and the other Omolowos, who were exiled with him, were upholding the ancient customs of Owo. His removal was effected without any inquiry or trial so there was no evidence put forward by the Government to warrant his exile. There was no evidence

[24] Beeley, Intelligence Reports, Para 29, p.61.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

linking chief Oshorunnaiye with the riots or suggesting that he actually led the people to riot. The rebellion of the Owo people was a spontaneous reaction to the unsavory British manipulation of Owo traditional political system. Chief Oshorunnaiye's refusal to present Olagbegi to the kingmakers was not a sign of opposition to the British administrators nor was it a sign of hatred for Olagbegi but his action was in line with Owo's native law and custom.

To impose an Oba on the people was one thing but to make him enjoy popular support was another thing. In the case of Olagbegi, although it appears that he was imposed by the British yet he managed to acquire some goodwill among the people after his enthronement and he became a popular Olowo later on.[25] His acceptance by the generality of the people of Owo was due largely to the efforts of Ojomo Oyigun, (Oligbogi), who reconciled Olagbegi with the *Omolowos* and the Ighare chiefs. The terms of the reconciliation agreement was not revealed, but the return of Chief Oshorunnaiye from Ifon, shortly after the peace meeting suggests that his return was one of the terms of the agreement. The order exiling chief Oshorunnaiye to Ifon was revoked and with his return in February 1918, peace again returned to Owo.

Owo traditions say that Olagbegi was 'extravagant in power,' which may mean that he was an autocrat, who, like his father, Atanleye 1, believed in the divine rights of kings. Immediately following upon his installation, Olagbegi created the chieftaincy title of

[25] Chief Adafin Fayemiwo, a staunch supporter of Olagbegi, told this writer that he and his friend, Chief Alajagho Alamana were instrumental in getting the Ighare chiefs to switch their support to Prince Olagbegi during the contest.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Owaduge.[26] But like the political system, the judicial system from 1917 greatly reflected the new system of administration. Henceforth, the Olowo ceased to be the final arbiter in the judicial system.

In 1918, there was an outbreak of influenza, (*'aja ka le arun'*), in Owo and southern Nigeria as a whole. The pandemic raged for two years. In that year also, shortly after Oshorunnaiye's return to Owo, the Ifon Districts was put through yet another administrative re-organization which involved a change of its status and scope. The Akoko country and the Ifon Districts were merged to form the new Owo Division of a new Ondo Province. With this change, Owo returned to its primal leadership position in the Division. The change also returned the Olowo to the position of the traditional overlord of the Ifon and Akoko areas.[27] With the establishment of Owo as an administrative Division in 1918, the British administration closed the initial chapter of its action in the administration of Owo.

On January 1, 1919, a new 'Native Administration' system was introduced into the new Owo Division. The underlying principle of this system was that the traditional African governmental institutions should be given some role in governing their own people. [28] Ironically, the introduction of effective Native Administration brought a decade of political instability into the new Owo Division. The first trouble erupted when Oba Olagbegi wanted to tour the Akoko country and was barred by the Lieutenant Governor,

---

[26] The position of Ogwaduge appears to be an imitation of the Benin title of Obaduage. The incumbent of this title was placed in a lofty, sprawling compound in Igboroko Quarter and treated as one of the high chiefs of Owo, a practice reminiscent of the Alubiolokun era.

[27] Ashara says that Akoko and Ifon had been under Owo by conquest in the 17th, 18th and the dying years of the 19th centuries. The Olowo's traditional rights over the Akoko towns and villages was recognized even by the British in 1901 when he was paid twenty pounds annually for the loss of certain Akoko towns owing allegiance to Owo but which were then under the Northern Nigerian administration in the new administrative arrangements. Ashara, The History, Beeley, Intelligence report.'

[28] This is known as the 'Indirect Rule' system. See Lord Lugard, The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa, New York: Archon, 1965, and Margery Perham, Native Administration in Nigeria, London, 1937.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Finlay, from going or even sending any one to the Akoko area without the permission of the District Officer. This was a surprise to Oba Olagbegi whose idea of his position was that of Paramount Authority in the Owo Division as he believed that he had the authority to tour any part of the Division without asking anybody's permission, and he was shocked.

For the first time, Olagbegi, the protégé of the British officials, then started to see himself and was being treated as a pariah by the British. At every turn, he felt like he had to be careful in his speech and actions and this made him become apprehensive of his British mentors. He was told that he could not do or say anything without first obtaining permission from the District Officers; one reason may be the fact that he could not communicate directly with the white man - he had to talk to them through an interpreter and this often irked him. He had thought that he would be dealing with them as his servants but the reverse seemed to be the case. All his traditional prerogatives, such as levying tributes on his subjects, particularly the Akoko people, the exaction of labor, etc, were denied by the British Colonial Officers. His chiefs could not believe that the British would so degrade him and take away the traditional prerogatives of the Olowo. Later, in reaction, the Olowo Olagbegi and some of his chiefs seized the opportunity presented to them by the new tax policy to protest against the continued rape of their tradition. With the tacit approval of the Owo authorities, the people beat up the tax collectors and there was a riot. [29]

In his efforts at searching for the causes of the riot, the District Officer vaguely accused Oba Olagbegi of failing to assist in ensuring that the administration ran

[29] Ashara, The History, Elerewe Ojo Olakunori, The Notes

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

smoothly. After a while, the riots died down and the town returned to normal. With the thought that the British officials had learnt their lesson, the Olowo then expected that they would give him a free hand in discharging his traditional duties as a Native Authority. But he was quick to find out that the British officials would not change their position as they considered some of the traditional practices repugnant to human decency. When he made his resentment known, the British accused him of recalcitrance and refusal to cooperate with the legally constituted authorities.

At the beginning of 1919, a new system of taxation was introduced with the underlying principle and expectation that the Owo Division must bear the cost of its administration. To prepare for the new taxation, a census enumeration was ordered for January of that year. The count itself was carried out by the Native Administration Officials, accompanied by the representatives of the Olowo and the Quarter heads and the names of the adult males were recorded in the compound assessment register.[30]

Later that year, a two shillings (2/-) poll tax was imposed on men while women were ordered to pay one shilling (1/-) per head.[31] The argument advanced in favor of this direct taxation by the British Administration, as against the payment of tribute, was that direct taxation has a moral benefit for the people because it would stimulate industry and production and tribute did not. But the introduction of this new system of taxation had more and far reaching negative consequences in Owo. The Olowo and his people saw the new taxation as an abrogation of the traditional right of the Olowo to collect tributes from his subjects. In essence, according to Ashara, the effect of direct taxation on the people of Owo was that they were made to pay for the maintenance of European grip on them.

---

[30] NAI: Gwan, L. C., A preliminary Inventory of the Administrative records assembled from Ondo Province, Ibadan, 1963:49, 59.
[31] NAI, Beeley, J. H., Intelligence Report, 1934, para. 45, p. 87

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Another effect of this taxation was that it led to the strengthening of the separatist tendencies of the Akoko people who were then part of the new Owo Division.[32] Thus, the activities of the various District Officers that came to Owo, especially from 1919, tended to arouse nationalist sentiments among the former dependencies of Owo kingdom. Henceforth, among the Akoko, anti-Owo sentiments started gaining momentum and eventually became very strong.

During the period, the British colonial government in Owo erected a hierarchical court system in the Division. Above the native courts was the Provincial Court which had as its President the District Officer who dealt with appeals from the Native Courts. [33] Shortly after the census, Oba Olagbegi was appointed the Native Authority for Owo Division, a position in which he was not very effective, as he did not understand the new concept of government. The administration did not appoint him a judge probably not to combine the executive and the judicial duties in the hands of an individual.

In 1920, there was change in the taxation policy of Owo Division. The rates were increased to six shillings per male adult while tax on women was abolished. The argument advanced in support of this arbitrary increase was not satisfactory to the generality of the people and once again, there was a riot in Owo. [34] In 1921, the Olowo Olagbegi presented a proposal to the administrators seeking recognition for his Inner Council, the traditional executive authority of Owo. The District Officers rejected the proposal.

---

[32] Ashara, The History

[33] In 1919, 49 cases came before the Provincial Court.

[34] The riots that marked the payment of the taxes in 1921/1922 were a testimony to the unreasonableness of the 300% increase of the tax burden.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In 1922, a proposal to set up Owo Central Judicial Council embracing the Owo District and the people of Akoko was rejected on the grounds that Owo chiefs would dominate the Council. Inevitably, Owo people viewed these disapprovals as an exhibition of hatred for the Olowo and his people. One District Officer, in fact, had argued very forcefully that in the Division, Ikare, in Akoko, was more central than Owo. [35] The people of Owo then started to grumble that the British officials had a hidden agenda which favored Akoko to the detriment of Owo.

Theoretically, each individual paid his tax and got a receipt. But in reality, tax was generally paid in a lump sum by the family compound head to the quarter heads, which in turn, paid it to the Olowo, who then gave the money to the Senior Accounting Clerk and the Divisional Treasurer. Apart from direct tax, the administration also derived considerable revenue from the courts, from timber royalties and fees, marriage licenses, market rents, trading permits, etc.[36]

In 1922, a dispute arose between the Olowo Olagbegi and chief Ojomo Oyigun; the latter was charged with disobeying the constituted authority of Owo by wearing a crown and was fined a substantial amount. [37] The problems around the Ojomo title thus began to show up again.

In 1922 also, there was a proposal to establish the Owo Central Judicial Council. This Council was to have Executive and Judicial Powers. But unrest in Owo, the alleged opposition of the Akoko chiefs to the idea and the lukewarm attitude of the British

[35] McKenzie in his report of 1921.
[36] NAI, Beeley, J. H., Intelligence Report, 1934,
[37] NAI: Petition dated 12/23/49 from HH Olowo Olateru Olagbegi and 25 chiefs to the Chief Commissioner and the Governor, Lagos, marked No. OL.100/2/295, para. iv, p. 9 made reference to this episode. In 1922, Ojomo Oyigun was prohibited by the government from wearing a beaded crown. See also Owo Div. Office, 12/30/49, No. 999/88, paper entitled 'proposed abolition of Ojomo title: Owo Town.' Encl. in No. 2198/340 0f 12/31/49, entry by C. Iles, ADO, OWO Div.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Officers themselves made the proposal to lapse.[38] There is no denying the fact that Owo chiefs were autocratic in their dealings with the Akoko people. The alleged arrogance and the exhibition of superiority complexes by some Owo chiefs in their dealings with the Akoko and the other erstwhile subordinate peoples hack back to the pre-colonial period and even in the face of Owo's subjection to British rule themselves, they still went about with an air of infinite superiority and at times tended to patronize the Akoko people. The Owo people failed to use the same tact and judgment that the time called for in their relationship with their neighbors of Akoko. While such treatment by Owo was normal in the 19th century, the British presence had tended to exacerbate it and the British used it to their own advantage particularly in the face of Owo's constant rioting and protest against British rule. In 1923, an Officer, Mr. H. D. La Mothe, dealt at length with the unsuitability of Owo as the center of the Division, further pointing to the fact that the administrators preferred Ikare to Owo as the administrative headquarters of the Division.[39]

In 1923, also, the loyalty of the Olowo Olagbegi and the Owo people was further tested by the Chief Secretary's comment that since Akoko paid more tax than Owo; the Akoko people should not come under the Olowo.[40] By this statement, he finally destroyed the remaining vestiges of the Olowo's traditional authority over the Akoko country. To express their anger over all these, the Owo people started violent riots against the tax increases.

In 1924, Chief Ojomo Aruliwo died, and his death was followed by another struggle for the vacant title among his sons and brothers. At one point, a leading candidate for

[38] Ashara, The History.
[39] These attitudes explain why the Divisional headquarters was not transferred to Owo until 1925.
[40] NAI: Beeley, J. H. Intelligence Report, 1934, para. 35, p. 54

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ojomo, Chief Obamadeshara, forced his way into the Ojomo's palace with his large supporters and was arrested by the District Officers and sent into exile in Benin for a temporary respite or a cooling off period. Before his return, however, with the approval of the District Administrators, Amaka was installed the new Ojomo.

Shortly thereafter, Chief Ojumu, Fadowole, one of the few educated chiefs of Owo at the time, died suddenly. His death sparked off another dispute in the town because the Olowo Olagbegi was accused of having poisoned him. After a few months, his brother, Fadeyi, was installed the new Ojumu.[41]

At every stage of the failure of the administration, a scapegoat was usually found. In 1924, for the 1923 tax riots, Olagbegi was summoned to Ifon, charged, tried and found guilty by the District Officers, Messrs. E. Boron, E. C. Clegg and W. J. W. Norco, and deported from the Division, first to Benin and then to Akure. At his trial, Olagbegi's defense was that, though, he had always desired to cooperate with the administration, he could not compromise with the British Officers to disunite Owo Division, former Owo kingdom. As far as Owo people were concerned, the deportation of Oba Olagbegi was a horrible perversion of justice.

Although he was reinstated by the Lieutenant Governor Finlay in September of the same year, after a six months absence from his throne, his removal in 1924 left Olowo very bitter. More and more, the Owo people came to despise the British officials as arrogant autocrats who would not scruple to dispose of any chief, no matter his rank, who did not tamely go along with any piece of their largely unreasonable and disruptive programs.

---

[41] Ashara, The History.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

By the end of 1924, however, the political situation in Owo started to change somewhat as the 'appeal court of the Olowo of Owo' was established with Oba Olagbegi as President and chiefs Ojomo, Oshere, Sashere, Ajana, Asaba and Elerewe as members or assessors. The judicial functions of the Olowo in this position between 1915 and 1924 were not, however, made clear. In 1925, Olowo Olagbegi paid an official visit to Ibadan to welcome the then Prince of Wales, later King Edward V111. Oba Olagbegi was one of the five recognized African rulers who shook hands with the august visitor.

In 1925, Captain J. A. Mackenzie, the District Officer, after a brief survey, arbitrarily increased taxes from six shillings (6/-) to nine shillings (9/-) per head. All men were to pay this same amount of tax, no matter their economic circumstances. Moreover, any family compound head who failed to collect all the tax expected from his compound was to be surcharged and make up the outstanding balance from his own personal coffers. Disturbances broke out immediately in response to this move.[42] On January 29, 1925, when a large section of the population refused to pay the tax, the main market, Ilede, was closed down and anti-riot Policemen were drafted to Owo. The police squad arrived in town on July 1, 1925 to put down the peoples' resistance.[43] Immediately following their arrival, eleven citizens, described as the ring-leaders of the tax agitation, were arrested, tortured and held without bail.

A commission of enquiry was instituted and its findings recommended that some of the leading chiefs be held responsible for the disturbances. The commission of inquiry, made up of the District Officers, Mackenzie and A. F. Pullen, found Chief George Adetula, the

[42] The song of the time was: 'Owo ori o, a ja tu o,' meaning: 'Taxation, cause of a people's dispersal.' Interview: Madam Eunice Tinuade Olugbadehan, August 15, 1999.
[43] Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Sashere of Owo, guilty of provoking the riots and the rebellion against the British authorities.

What all these confrontations meant is that the British were engineering major social changes in Owo without meaningfully involving the people. Like European colonial rulers all over Africa, the British in the Owo kingdom were absolutely sure that they alone knew what was good for the African people over whom they ruled.

In 1927, another general assessment was carried out by the District Officer, Mr. Mackenzie. This also led to tax increases in 1928 and the tax increases became the cause of another round of rioting in Owo that year.

Instead of relating the tax riots to the resentment of the people, Government misrule and arbitrary taxation, the Government, as was its practice, found a scapegoat. Following the outbreak of riots, Chief George Adetula, the Sashere of Owo, was arrested, tried and found guilty of leading the tax agitation and removed to Isho. [44]

From the beginning of 1929, however, Owo entered another brief period of peace. The British officials had come to realize that without the co-operation of the Olowo and his chiefs, peace was unattainable in Owo in particular and in the Division in general.[45]

In that year also, the idea of an Inner Council for the Olowo was resuscitated and on April 8, 1930, the Governor approved its establishment. The working of the council was more political than judicial as was pointed out by two District Officers, E. K. Melbourne, and A. F. Marshall, in 1930. Apart from the trial of the Oloja of Ifon (ruler of Ifon) for embezzlement and extortion, there was no judicial duty performed by the council.

---

[44] He was held in incarceration in Isho for six years before he was allowed to return to Owo and to his position as the Sashere.

[45] It has been suggested that the British were forced to change their attitude and methods of governance because of the general protests and riots over taxation in many parts of Nigeria during the period. E.g. The Aba riots of 1929.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In 1930, following the willingness of the Ifon chiefs to have appeals from Ifon heard in Owo, the 'Appeal Court of the Owa of Owo' was renamed the Owo Appeal Court Grade 'B.' Its membership was consequently enlarged to reflect its new sphere of influence. The Oloja and the Adigun of Ifon were brought in as members.[46]

The Central Judicial Council[47] established on the 4th of April 1930 enabled the Olowo at least to discuss matters affecting the whole Division. As was the tradition before the coming of the British, all the head chiefs had to attend the meetings in the palace. It was usually held quarterly. This also made the Olowo to feel, to some extent, at least, that he was once again, as in the past, the traditional head of the whole Division.

In 1931, District Officers Melbourne, Pullen and Marshall remarked that a new era of hopefulness and a determination to progress had dawned on the Division. First, the proposal for an Inner Council, first put forward in 1921, was at last approved. This restored the privileges the chiefs had enjoyed under the indigenous political system. They could then, to some extent, act as they had used to do in the past, for example, settle some petty cases in their quarters. As members of the Inner Council, they had some authority to discuss the affairs of the town and their membership of the Inner Council enabled them to receive some stipends from the administration. In 1932, the Owo Native Court was split into two: one under chief Ojumu and the other, under chief Ojomo, thus enlisting the support of both chiefs and their people. [48] In 1933, in addition to the reduction in taxes,

[46] Apart from hearing appeals from the Provincial courts, 'Assizes' were usually held there in June as was the case in 1930 when Mr. Justice Berkley dealt with the criminal cases.
[47] In 1930, the judicial council heard 76 cases.
[48] As the political head, the Governor of the Western Provinces had supreme power over the courts. He could grant pardon to any offender. In 1924, he had intervened in the banishment imposed on Oba Olagbegi and he personally reinstated him in September 1924, after Olagbegi had spent six months in exile at Akure.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Oba Olagbegi was permitted to tour the whole Division, even though he could not extract tribute.

In 1930 also, the Lieutenant Governor, Hon. Finlay, also reduced the penalty imposed on the Oloja of Ifon. He was fined fifty pounds or one year imprisonment with hard labor and was to be dismissed from office, not to live within twenty miles of Ifon for the next two years. Reviewing the judgment, the lieutenant Governor Finlay ordered the refund of the fifty pounds fine and vacated the sentence.

The administration of justice, both in the Native Courts and those entirely manned by the British, appeared to be efficient. In the Native court, there was a rare desire to transfer cases from there to the higher courts. Even in the appeal against the Native court's decisions, there were rare occasions when the decisions of the court were completely set aside although modifications of the decisions were, at times, necessary. In the courts entirely manned by white men the documents show signs of fair play.

Oba Olagbegi, according to chief Ashara, was one of the few Obas in the country who strongly resisted all attempts by the British colonial government to flout the authority of the Oba in Yorubaland. But on February 10, 1938, Olagbegi, at age 56, died. The cause was a cardiac arrest or arrhythmia.

Following the death of Olagbegi in 1938, seven candidates, five of whom were educated, contested the vacant throne. On March 12, 1938, the high chiefs confirmed the rumors that Ajike Adeloye was the successful candidate for Olowo. At O9:30am, the court hall was packed full of the town's people and they continued to wait patiently for the arrival of the District Officer, Captain R. A. Vosper, who came in later at 10:20am. Immediately upon his arrival, Prince Ajike Atanleye, who was waiting behind the Native

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Authority (NA) offices, came into the hall, accompanied by the high chiefs: Ojumu, Osere, Sashere and others. Chief Elerewe, whose duty it was traditionally to proclaim 'Oke re ke' meaning 'Total Silence,' in such a public forum, did so and the court hall, which was full of people to such an extent that the crowd spilled over into the streets outside the hall, fell into total silence. Chief Ojumu then stepped forward and held up Ajaka's hand, as custom demanded, and introduced the successful candidate to the people of Owo. Chief Ojumu said that he had brought prince Ajike out to be crowned as the next Olowo and enquired from the people whether or not they would own and serve him as their head, as Olowo. The concourse, amongst who were the representatives of all the other surrounding communities, towns and villages, quarter heads, the Omolowos, the high chiefs and the Ighare chiefs, unanimously answered three times, in the affirmative.

Mr. Vosper, the District Officer, then expressed his pleasure in having been fortunate to witness such an honorable session in the history of Owo. He stated that March 12, 1938 was a historic day for the people. He was told, he said, that Ajike was the successful candidate and he had been chosen to ascend the Owo throne and so had to be brought out that day for public confirmation. He said that he was pleased at the concurrence of the town's people in electing Ajike the new Olowo. He had known Ajike, he continued, for only three years but once he had been able to watch him at close range, he had found him to be a kind and hard working man. He had a good character which was required of a modern Oba. Mr. Vosper concluded that Owo then ranked with the other neighboring towns with educated rulers.

On May 8, 1938, at 04:00pm, Ajike was installed the Olowo of Owo by His Honor, the Chief Commissioner, Mr. G.G. Shute in front of the Government School House in the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

presence of tens of thousands of people, representatives from the Oba of Benin, the Owa of Ilesha, the Deji of Akure, the Ewi of Ado-Ekiti, the Sheave of Ondo and many others.

Ajike was born in 1889, the year his father, Atanneye 1, came to the throne. He had his early elementary education in the African Baptist School, Owo. In 1903, he transferred to the newly opened Government School, Owo as one of the foundation pupils under the administration of the District Officer, Mr. Reginald Durries Napier Raikes and Inspector of education, Phillips, the last based at the Hope Waddell Institute, Calabar. In December 1907, at the annual prize giving day of the school, a gold edged bible was presented to him by his uncle, Olowo Ogunoye, for good conduct.

During his school days, Ajike was a keen and sober youth. Upon leaving school, he had worked as a clerk in a number of timber concessions in Siluko, Benin area and he did that for many years before he left with a good endorsement to the employ of the British Cotton Growing Association, (BCGA), Oshogbo. In 1919, at the inauguration of the Owo Native Administration, he was appointed the treasurer to the administration, a position in which he served for eighteen years without any blemish and with satisfaction to the British colonial administration before contesting the vacant stool of Olowo.[49]

The new Olowo added one row to the three rows of beads for the high chiefs, making it four and gave the Ighares of Iloro quarter three rows of beads in appreciation of their role in the burial and coronation of the Olowo. The Ute road was constructed and the construction of many other roads soon followed. But things were changing, however, during the few years Ajike was on the throne in Owo.

[49] Hence his nickname of 'Atobatele,' meaning: 'One who has already attained the position of a king before becoming one.'

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Thus far, we can see that two phenomena of 19th century West African political culture continued to dominate events throughout the first half of the 20th century. The first was the consolidation of a number of political entities such as states, kingdoms and religious institutions. We continue to see such political entities and institutions flourishing as the Asante, the Sokoto Caliphate, Bornu, Benin, the Fante and the Yoruba states. This continuity can also be seen in the case of Owo kingdom as it continued to exist as the kingdom of Owo, although under the superstructure of a colonial administrative hierarchy, first from Benin and later Lagos.

The second phenomenon of 19th century origin was the development of a new elite, adhering largely to Christianity, educated in the Western tradition and speaking the English language. One of the attributes of this class of elite was its shared loyalties and political goals that went beyond the pre-colonial states and in many respects related to those of the Africans in the Diaspora in the New World.

British assimilation policies had tried to produce black gentlemen out of the new elites but expected them to collaborate in the creation of a new order in West Africa. The new elites generally played along. But after the conquest of West Africa, the British changed their collaborators. They initiated a policy of indirect rule in which the colonialists started to use the old traditional elites to achieve their goal of peaceful administration and economic exploitation because of the paucity of administrators and a lack of money to attract needed staff from the metropolis. The traditional elites were seen as being in direct touch with the people. As the colonialists moved inland, they displayed their technology by conquering the recalcitrant traditional ruler and offered salary and other emoluments to those ready to accept their authority.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Later scenarios will show that while the new educated elites admired the heroism of those among the traditionalists who resisted, they had their focus not on the 19th century state of things and political entities, but rather, on the nation states being created by the British colonialists. Where the ruling traditional elite had agreed to submit through treaties or where they could be absolved from responsibility from the penalties for organizing resistance, the British confirmed the existing royal families on their thrones. This has created deterrence to faster development after colonial rule and it has also left a dichotomy in which there are two levels of authority. The local traditional ruler and the local government administrator, with both contending for acceptance, although it is clear that political and economic power are in the hands of the new elites.

Yoruba nationalism during the colonial period remained elusive because of lack of unity. Memories of the 19th century wars and conflicts had tended to entrench the separation of the states rather than foster the unity of the Yoruba people. A major cleavage existed between the Oyo people, in theory led by the Alafin (but in practice by the Ibadan Balogun), and the other states in the anti-Ibadan alliance or coalition of the 19th century, known as the Ekitiparapo. This division was accentuated by the spread of the world religions of Islam and Christianity – Islam among the Oyo Yoruba and Christianity among the other groups, giving to each different outlooks, orientations, identities, ambitions and ideals. Between 1914 and 1930, the British tried to impose the paramount authority of the Alafin on the Ibadan and thus on the rest of Yorubaland, unsuccessfully. Rather than fostering unity, this only aroused hostility outside Oyo and the British quietly dropped the scheme after 1930.[50]

[50] See Atanda, J.A., The New Oyo Empire, Indirect Rule and Change in Western Nigeria, Longman, 1973.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Yet some Yoruba people continued to work towards the unity of the whole Yoruba ethnic group. Like the Ibos, they organized urban unions which reflected the political divisions of the 19th century. After many efforts, the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a Pan-Yoruba cultural group, embracing all Yoruba elements both at home and abroad, was founded in 1948.[51]

Many commentators on British rule in Nigeria have criticized the British policy of initial direct rule and the later indirect rule systems in Yorubaland and for the paucity of economic development and lack of sound educational planning and other aspects of social development.[52] The discussions of the history of British colonial rule in Africa are in two contrasting perspectives. In one version, the imperial period and the imposition of colonial rule on the African people is seen as a civilizing mission in which the British and the other European powers came to Africa to benefit the people in the Dark continent, by restoring peace and security, erecting modern nations where there were none previously, and establishing institutional infrastructures such as roads, hygiene and modern health facilities like hospitals and educational institutions; this was seen as beneficial to the people. But others see the colonizers as part of the causes of Africa's modern problems and the period of colonial rule as a period of oppression of the African peoples. Most commentators, even among Anglophiles, see the period of British rule as a period of European exploitation and the extraction of the wealth of the African peoples for the development of the metropolis while little or nothing was done for the 'natives' under

[51] But it too became moribund in the 1960s, shortly after Nigeria's independence from British rule, and along with the other such cultural groups, it was banned by the military in 1966. see Arifalo, S.O., The Egbe Omo Oduduwa: a study in ethnic and cultural nationalism, Akure, 2001.

[52] Burns, Alan, A Short History of Nigeria, London, 1959; Crowder, Michael, The Story of Nigeria, London, 1966. see also his West Africa Under Colonial Rule, Longman, 1968

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

their tutelage. It is true therefore to say that most recent examinations of the British role are critical of the colonial period and the British role.

It is not, however, being suggested here that the impact of British rule on Owo had only bad effects. In actual fact, the British administration improved the life-style and health of the Owo people. The administration improved existing roads, provided health care and made available about six hundred gallons of water per day for Owo town. The impact of British rule is still a subject of much debate and we do not want to get into that debate here.

But by far the greatest problem created by British rule in Yorubaland is in the area of land demarcation and the affirmation of boundaries between neighboring kingdoms. Before the onset of British administration, boundaries between kingdoms were causes for war but once the wars were over, a permanent line of demarcation was agreed upon between the contending, contiguous kingdoms. In the case of Owo and Akure, there was no dispute over their boundaries as both kingdoms had no boundary demarcation with each other and so Owo and Akure never had to fight over their boundaries with each other because their areas of control were not coterminous. Owo traditions say that Owo had a boundary with Oba Ile, not with Akure.[53] Oba-Ile, a small village near Akure, is one of the oldest settlements in the area and she shared a common boundary with Owo. That was the reason for Owo's claim that Owo land extended beyond Ogbese and Ago-Abo in the west.[54]

By the Order-In-Council of 1918, the British Colonial Government had arbitrarily created a divisional boundary between Akure and Owo, without reference to history, to

[53] Ashara, The History, Elerewe Ojo Olakunori and Fayemiwo.
[54] Owo Div. 1/1. 428, Vol. 1, Ala Forest Reserve and the Akure/Owo Land Dispute.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

determine each of the two kingdoms' spheres of influence and areas of control before the imposition of British rule. These artificial boundaries made river Ogbese the boundary between Owo and Akure areas.[55] This policy led to border clashes between farmers from both sides with those from Akure seeing that as an opportunity for a larger area to farm. In fact, following this arbitrary demarcation of the extent of Akure, the Akure people started to assert their right in accordance with the boundary set up by the government. While Akure was claiming that the Government had cheated her in the creation of the boundary, Owo specifically accused the Resident of Ondo Province, based in Akure, as being instrumental in giving away Owo land to Akure, a thing contrary to historical precedent. Owo traditions say that in the pre-colonial era, Akure dared not make such a claim.[56]

The controversy over the boundary adjustments deepened especially during the reigns of Atanleye 11 and the Deji of Akure, Oba Adesida 1. These two Obas led their respective peoples in the agitation that ensued, which in some instances, led to bloody clashes between the citizens of the two kingdoms in the Ala and Igigiri areas along the Ogbese River and into the area claimed by Akure, such as Ago-Abo. Some sources say that the disputes affected the health of Olowo Ajike Atanleye 11.

During his visit to Ibadan at the Obas' Conference of 1939, Ajike is said to have gained great honor for his sound contributions to the debates at the meetings. However,

---

[55] Owo Div. 1/1, 428, Vol. 1, Akure-Owo Boundary Dispute. Oral evidence indicates that Adesida 1, the Deji of Akure had helped the Olowo of Owo, Oba Olagbegi 1, when he was in a brief exile in Akure in 1924. It is alleged that Olagbegi had conceded the disputed area (Owo land - from the Ogbese river to an area beyond Ago-Abo to the west), to the Deji as 'payment' for his help in restoring him to the throne. On the basis of that, in 1939, the Akure people became infuriated and attacked Owo people when Olagbegi's successor, Ajike rejected the deal. Ashara, The history.

[56] Only one war between Owo and Akure is definitely remembered, in the reign of the Deji Igbogi. This is described in detail in Atandare, J.: Iwe Itan Akure (unpublished); also in NAI: Weir, N.A.C., Intelligence Report on Akure, 1935, Appendix D.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

at the next Oba's Conference in 1940, he could not attend the meetings because of indisposition and so he sent chiefs Ojumu Fadeyi and Sashere George Adetula to represent him. On August 22, 1940, Ajike died after reigning for only two years and six months. It was a great loss to Owo.[57]

At Ijebu-Ode, on September 3, 1940, the Governor of the Western Provinces, Sir Bernard Bourdilon, made the following remarks to the 15th Conference of Yoruba Obas. Chiefs:

Since the last meeting of the Conference, death has taken from us Atanleye II, the Olowo of Owo, who, though had only held office for a short time, had proved himself a just ruler and wise councilor. I should take this opportunity of expressing to the people of Owo and to yourselves, my sympathy in your loss and to welcome the newly appointed Olowo, who will, I have no doubt, follow worthily in the foot steps of his predecessor and will, I trust, never forget that the office to which he has been appointed is carrying with it great responsibilities. [58]

This peculiar remark was the first hint that someone, among the crowded field of nine contestants, had already been selected and appointed to the vacant throne of Owo. Shortly, after the announcement of the death of Olowo Ajike in 1940, it became apparent that the British officials, with the concurrence of the high chiefs and the Ighare chiefs had selected Olateru, the youngest candidate and the son of Olagbegi 1, to be the next Olowo of Owo.

Chief Ojomo Amaka, *the Olori Ebi Omolowo*, who consulted the Ifa oracle is said to have predicted that the new reign would be reminiscent of a combination of two eras, the fiery reign of Olowo Ajaka and the enlargement of scale and longevity of the reign of

---

[57] Although Ashara has attributed the causes of the king's untimely death to the boundary disputes, one of the king's daughters, Mrs. Awosika, told this writer at St. Andrew's College, Oyo, in 1968, that he was poisoned by an aspirant to the throne. But Chief Adafin Fayemiwo, the acting Akowa of Iloro Quarters had said that the king died following errors he committed when carrying out some traditional rites. But the real cause of death appear to be attributable to chronic diabetes and renal failure rather than because of any of the above reasons

[58] Ashara, The History,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Olowo Adedipe. Immediately, the potent of the prediction started to unfold. Olateru was to go to Ushama for the three months' stay to learn the intricacies of the role of Olowo. Unlike his immediate predecessor, Ajike, who had stayed there for the entire three months, Olateru borrowed a leaf from Ajaka and sat on the stool three times and headed for the palace. Then, in the palace, he chose a sword identified with Olowo Ajaka. But in a swift move, his retainers switched the sword identified with Adedipe Elewu-Okun, his great grand father, into his hands. And he then showed that to the Ighare chiefs, who were watching his performance.

In retrospect, his reign seems to have combined both the fiery reign of Ajaka and the longevity and enlargement of scale that characterized the reign of Adedipe Elewu-Okun, his great grandfather. It was also predicted that he had to be very careful in his dealings with the people of Iloro quarter so that he would not have to vacate the throne after a twenty-five year reign. If he could stave off that nemesis, the throne would be established in his line for a long time otherwise no matter how successful his reign was it would always be a struggle for him and his line.[59]

On March 29, 1941, at 04:00pm, Olateru was crowned Olowo of Owo by his honor, the Chief Commissioner, Western Provinces, G.G. Shute, on the grounds of the Owo Government School in the presence of a large crowd of onlookers. Thousands of people

[59] In 1962, a dispute developed between the Olowo Olateru Olagbegi II and the people of Iloro quarter on the issue of the method of celebration of the Ero and the idea of an Idaniken, which the Oba had mulled. It was customary to celebrate the Ero following that of the Olowo after a nine year interval but he wanted it performed in five years and he did. The Ighare chiefs also rejected his proposal to make one of his sons an Idaniken because that is not the mode of succession to the throne by a Yoruba Oba. It is a Benin practice but he wanted to continue the tradition of imitating this Benin practice.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

witnessed the occasion, including representatives from the other traditional rulers in Yorubaland and various organizations in Owo and environ.[60]

Oba Olateru was born in 1910, three years before his father, Olagbegi 1, ascended the throne. He had his elementary education at Owo Government School and during his school days, he was a keen and polite student, an avid athlete, who at every annual prize-giving day received prizes for sportsmanship. He carried this habit of sportsmanship with him into his adulthood.[61] On leaving school, he became a schoolteacher but he later joined the Owo Native Administration as a treasury clerk. He worked at Owo as a tax collector but later, transferred to Ute and while there, he won the contest for Olowo.[62]

Ashara says that Oba Olateru Olagbegi made provisions for more elementary schools and following his accession, the number of elementary schools increased from four to twelve. The school population increased from one thousand, three hundred and thirty in 1941 to three thousand, five hundred and sixty three in 1950. The Anglican Mission, a Christian denomination, had built Sts. John and Mary, two teacher training Colleges and post primary institutions for men and women and St. Catherine's Grammar School for girls. The Roman Catholic Mission established St. Louis Girls Grammar School and St. Louis Hospital. Another Christian mission had built the New Church Grammar School. The Methodist mission, one of the first Christian missions to establish a school in Owo, also joined the race for school construction at the post primary level by building the Methodist Grammar School, and later, Mr. Ajasin established Owo High School. Also established during Olowo Olateru Olagbegi's tenure are Irekari Grammar School, Idoani,

---

[60] Ashara, a partisan supporter, says that great was the day and fortunate was Owo and her people when Olateru Olagbegi became their ruler.

[61] Even when he became Olowo, Olateru continued to carry on one of the sports that were the darling of the British officials, lawn tennis. He was an avid lawn tennis player and he won many trophies during his time.

[62] Oral evidence, Chief Otegbeye, the Asolo of Owo and former secretary to the Olowo Ogunoye II, 1985.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and Ekamarun Grammar School, Ifon. Many secondary modern schools were established during his time. The West regional Government established the Owo Trade Center and the Farm Center. Ashara ascribes these educational opportunities to the wisdom and foresight of Oba Olateru Olagbegi.

The new king rebuilt the palace with an impressive facade, made improvements in areas of the palace which had become dilapidated and created modern amenities and conveniences in the place while preserving some of the old buildings with their traditions. There are still in the palace multiple compounds, Ughas (courtyards), both ancient and modern. It appears that many Owo people followed his example by erecting modern buildings. During the time of Olowo Olagbegi 11, there were newly laid streets throughout his domain with the main market, Ilede, having improved and modern stalls, (but no toilets, as the public toilets that were built by the colonial authorities were unhygienic and constituted a health hazard), as well as a motor park. Buildings of modern types were erected for the council offices and he was instrumental in the building of the Owo Town Hall[63] at the Igbo-Ogwata near Okiti Asegbo. Other amenities like the Owo Town Hall, Cooperative Assembly Hall, the National and Standard Banks, the supply of pipe borne water, electric lighting in the streets, a new imposing central mosque and a Muslim Grammar School, all coming into being during the time he was Olowo. [64]

Immediately following Olateru's enthronement, he brought forward the proposal for the establishment of a secondary school in Owo. The people of Owo had longed for this type of educational institution for a considerably long time. It is said that he believed that education, beyond the elementary level, would bring progress to the town and

[63] A small replica of the Mapo Hall, Ibadan.
[64] Ashara and partisan Owo people may say what they like but the historian must present the facts.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

provide enlightenment to the people. In 1946, after some efforts on the part of the new king and his Edibo chiefs, the idea of building a secondary school became a reality when the premier secondary school in Owo, Imade College,[65] was established. Imade College stands as a monument to the self-determination of Owo people and co-operation between the king, Olateru Olagbegi, and the people of Owo.

Before the establishment of the school, it became a problem to get suitable personnel among the citizens of Owo, with the requisite qualification and training, to staff the administration of the school as there was then no individual with the required qualifications among Owo citizens with the capacity to head the new secondary school. [66] Olateru strove strenuously to realize the goal of training up an Owo citizen to attain the requisite qualification. He suggested that a 'son of the soil' be sponsored by the Owo community for further studies at the University overseas. As a result, after consultation with some old students of St. Andrews College, Oyo, Mr. Michael Adekunle Ajasin was selected to go to Fourah- Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone, and (now the University of Sierra Leone).[67] Following his return to Nigeria, Ajasin became the principal of the school.[68]

Ashara says that following Olateru's ascent on the throne of Owo, progress and development became the norm in the kingdom and that there had not been any time in Owo history when she had seen so much advancement and progress in education, town

---

[65] Named after Imade, the founder of the kingdom.

[66] The qualification of a Bachelor's degree and training in post–primary educational theory and practice were required by the British administration for the headship of a secondary school in Nigeria.

[67] Mr. Ajasin obtained a Bachelor's degree in history from Sierra Leone and a diploma in Education from the University of Durham, England. He returned home to head Imade College, Owo. In 1962, he was fired from that position by Oba Olateru Olagbegi. In 1963, Ajasin established Owo High School, Owo and later, in 1979, he became the first civilian Governor of Ondo state.

[68] Since its inception in 1946, Imade College, Owo had produced many graduates and professionals in all fields. This writer is a proud product of Imade College, Owo.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

planning, health, religion, agriculture and administrative reforms. But we have to remember also that there had not been any such time in Owo history and in Yorubaland as a whole. Olateru was fortunate to rule at a time of great progress in Nigeria, especially in the Western Region. But a critical assessment of the period reveals that it was also a turbulent and sad era. Although the era witnessed, at the outset, an unprecedented advancement in education and enlightenment and an economic boom derived from cocoa production and sale, and general prosperity, Owo people also continued in the path of their frontier-like culture of political turbulence, instability and unpredictability.

As soon as he ascended the throne, the new king resuscitated the Owo Inner Council which then became, as in the past, the executive council of the land. In 1944, in consultation with this Council, he mulled the idea of creating an Idaniken and twenty-four new chieftaincy titles, called *Aragbagbaiye*.[69]

Later, in 1947, the Owo Town Council, with elected members who were the representatives of the people with fifty per cent of the council members being non-traditional chiefs, both men and women, came into being. The Olowo exercised authority and ruled with his Inner Council. Under the guidance of the District Officers E. N. C. Dickinson, J. F. Hayley and W. K. D. Macray and with the cooperation of Chief (then Mr.) M. A. Ajasin, a re-organized District Council came into effect. The Council began to work to democratize according to the provisions of the Richards Constitution which came into effect in 1946. Administrative Committees were formed and members were

[69] In 1957, these citizens, chosen by the people, became members of the Inner Council but with a proviso that the titles would not be hereditary. The Aragbagbaiyes: for Igboroko- (1) Aladenika-Olusemola; (2) Adetula-Olufisan; (3) Justus Okoro; (4) Giwa Amadu-Egbewa; for Iloro- (1) Samuel Adeloye- Aboluwodi; for Ehin-Ogbe- (1) Jombo-Olanunma; (2) Badejo Oloka-Olora; for Isaipen: (1) Olanipekun Oyegun; (2) Jacob Dapo Aisida; for Ijebu: (1) Babatunde Ogunbodede- Ashara.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

appointed and placed in charge of the different departments of the council. It was still the traditional order but with a façade of progress.

A feud between Oba Olateru Olagbegi and Ojomo Amaka had developed in 1941 because of two reasons. First, for Amaka's support for Prince Yeye Olayanju, a senior brother of Oba Olateru during the contest for the throne of Olowo. Second was the allegation that Ojomo Amaka wore a beaded crown during the annual celebration of the Alaputin festival. The Ojomos had worn beaded crowns in the past as this right was granted the Ojomo when the title was first conferred on Oludipe in c1781. [70] In 1946, Ojomo Amaka wore a crown again and that became an occasion for the renewal of the Olowo – Ojomo rift. The Olowo – Ojomo controversy which had plagued Owo since the creation of the Ojomo title in the later part of the 18th century came back to haunt Owo. In 1946, a dispute arose between the Ojomo, on the one hand and the Olowo backed by the Omolowos, the high chiefs and the entire people of Owo and villages, on the other.[71]

For four years, several secret messages had been sent to Chief Amaka, to intimidate him and cow him down but he refused to yield. Chief Ashara calls these messages warnings but they were threats and ultimatums.[72] Eventually, the Inner Council under the behest of the Olowo brought a charge of non-cooperation against Chief Ojomo Amaka. It appears that, in this regard, the resuscitated Council was then doing the work for which it was brought back to life.

---

[70] Although, successive Olowos have frowned on this practice in the past, it was only during the colonial period that it became a major issue. In 1924, Ojomo Oyigun had incurred the ire of Olagbegi 1, when he wore a crown at his annual *Alaputin* ceremony. The troubles of that period, called 'Ote Ade', 'The Crown Controversy,' were part of the reason Olagbegi 1 was sent to a brief exile, first in Benin and, later, Akure. Another incident was in 1938 when Ojomo Amaka wore a crown at Oyo. He had accompanied Olowo Ajike Atanleye 11 to the Oba's Conference at Oyo and the Olowo felt piqued because of Ojomo's regal appearance.

[71] In his one-sided view of this conflict, chief Ashara says that except for a few relatives and a few of his associates, the Ojomo was at loggerheads with the other part of the Owo community.

[72] Ashara, The History

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The Omolowos, the development Committee founded by the then elites of Owo, the chief Commissioner of the Western Provinces, Sir Gerald Whitely, the Resident of Ondo Province, Mr. J.B. Bovell-Jones, and the Administrative Officers of the Owo District and Owo Division, all intervened to make the Ojomo start '....cooperating with the Olowo and Council,' to no avail.[73]

In 1949, the open rift with intrigues that characterized the 19th century politics of Owo then began to rear its head again and the young and newly installed king thought that he had a solution. On April 10, 1949, the king convened a general assembly of about fifty thousand people at the Oju-Ogwa (between the Government School and the court buildings) at 11:00am. It is said that the meeting was held according to custom to carry out the wishes of the king and that the people had come to denounce Chief Ojomo Amaka because of his recalcitrance.

Opening the meeting, Chief George Adetula, the Sashere and chief spokesman on the occasion, announced that the assembly, including members of the Inner Council, having heard of the various charges preferred against Ojomo Amaka and having put into consideration his various 'incorrigible' habits, had passed a unanimous resolution, in accordance with Owo custom, to remove Amaka from being the Ojomo and to abolish the title altogether. He announced that the Olowo, the original grantor of the title, had decided to withdraw it.

The assembled people then proceeded to carry out the curse, *'Lu ese*,' meaning 'to beat the feet on the ground for the purpose of a curse,' that the title would never be resuscitated and revived again. A pit was dug in the main market, Ilede, and all the

[73] Ashara, The History

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

senior chiefs in Owo, each in turn, threw a piece of stone into it. It was directed that a goat be slaughtered and the blood drained into the pit. The blood of the goat was also sprinkled on the ground and all present dipped their right big toe in it. That was a token of the irrevocable nature of the curse that the assembly was about to pronounce on the Ojomo and his offspring. The curse was then pronounced and all the people present started to beat the ground with their feet.

The Omolowos, the princes and the princesses had passed the same resolution, denouncing the Ojomo and again, they had slaughtered a goat and carried out the same process of abolition and proscription of the title and the condemnation of the incumbent holder of the title.[74]

But all these doings only exacerbated the Ojomo trouble rather than end it. As soon as the assembly dispersed, rioting began, first in the Ojomo's palace and later, in the Ijebu quarter as a whole and then all over Owo town. Many houses were burnt down and many people were wounded. But for the immediate intervention of the colonial authorities, there would have been more serious troubles. From that point on, all Ijebu people or anybody for that matter, who supported or sympathized with the Ojomo was an easy target for persecution. Many of the Ijebu people suffered deprivations in the farms and even some of the men lost their wives through forceful divorce. All this was done because of the desire to re-create the Benin pattern of monarchy in Owo kingdom, strong, absolutist and dominant in the affairs of Owo, ensuring perpetual succession to the Owo kingship by one family out of many, contrary to Owo traditions and Yoruba cultural practices.

---

[74] According to chief Ashara, this was the traditional way Owo was governed before the advent of the Europeans. Ashara, The History.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Following this incident, the government set up a commission of inquiry to find out the root causes of the disturbances that greeted this abolition exercise. A Commission of Inquiry, known as the Oni Commission, made up of the Oni of Ife, Sir Adesoji Aderemi, the Oshemawe of Ondo, Oba Akinrele Tewogboye 11 and the Ewi of Ado-Ekiti, Oba Aladesanmi 11, was set up. After a few sittings, the commission published its findings and presented its recommendations. In October 1949, a copy of the report of the commission was sent to chief Amaka, the former Ojomo, by the Resident of Ondo Province. As expected, most of the recommendations of the commission did not favor him. On October 20, 1949, Chief Ojomo Amaka died. [75]

It appeared as if the death of Amaka would bring an end to the Ojomo controversy. With the abolition of the title and the death of the last incumbent, the continued agitation surrounding the title appeared fruitless, particularly as the Commission of inquiry had found against the continued existence of the position. But that was not the case. While Chief Ashara, who is from Ijebu quarter and who had then become an Aragbagbaiye for Ijebu and the other prominent citizens of the quarter, such as Chief Oyemolatiyan, supported the Olowo, the grass roots, community activists and the members of the large Ojomo family became extremely depressed and disgruntled and would not be pacified by anything short of the full restoration of the Ojomo title and they continued the fight for the restoration of the title.

On October 31, 1950, the government announced that, having fully considered the recommendation of the Oni Commission of Inquiry and the various memoranda and

[75] Although chief Ashara says that the death of Amaka was mourned by the Owo people, the news of the death of chief Amaka was an occasion for joy in the Olowo's palace. The bitterness between the Olateru and Amaka camps was that deep.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

representations submitted since the traditional abolition exercise, it was satisfied that the Olowo and Council had acted within their right in accordance with the custom and tradition of Owo in abolishing the Ojomo title and it added that this act was in the best interest of the Owo community in which the quarter formed an integral part.[76] The government, however, informed the Olowo and Council that they would be well advised to accept all the recommendations of the commission. Among other recommendations, the commission recommended the total abolition of the Ojomo title as it would ever continue to be a cause of trouble in the governance of Owo.

However, the statement of the government, although generally favorable to the Olowo's camp, had an ominous tone. The government recommended that the Olowo accept all the recommendations of the commission. The reason for that had to do with one curious aspect of the recommendation of the Oni Commission which stated that, while the Ojomo title remained abolished according to the wishes of the Olowo and his chiefs, it also recommended that 'the Omo Omojomos should be entitled to the traditionally recognized privileges of the Omolowos.'[77] This aspect of the recommendation was a live wire that would extend the life of the agitation for the restoration of the Ojomo title. It gave the Omojomos a reason to continue the fight, not for the restoration of the Ojomo title, but for the acceptance of the entire recommendations of the Oni Commission of Inquiry.

---

[76] This constitutional act of the Olowo and his chiefs, which the Government approved, according to chief Ashara, has precedents in the annals of Owo history. According to the historian of Owo, when the Oshodi, during the reign of Olowo Omasan, rebelled against the Olowo, his title which was next to the Olowo at that time was abolished. Chieftaincies like those of the Elefene and the Olomu of Okiti-Omu were abolished during the reign of Olowo Ogeja.

[77] What are the primary traditional privileges of the Omolowos? Chief among these is the right to present a candidate to vie for Olowo. Later, the Omojomos would demand that this proviso entitled them to present the next eight candidates for Olowo. Logically speaking, they were right.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

At first, the Omojomos rejected the recommendations that the title of Ojomo be abolished. But seeing that the government had directed the Olowo's camp to accept all the recommendations including 'the rights of the Omojomos as Omolowos,' the Omojomos then changed their focus and accepted the totality of the recommendations. In their subsequent petitions to the British government both in Lagos, Nigeria and Whitehall, London, England, the Omojomos then stressed their acceptance of the entire Oni Commission's recommendations.

In 1949, Chief Obafemi Awolowo became the leader of Government Business in the Western Provinces of Nigeria. On September 25, 1950, Olowo Olateru Olagbegi on the invitation of the British Council, traveled to the United Kingdom on sight seeing.[78] On April 19, 1951, the Omojomos received a reply from the Chief Secretary to the British Colonial Government in Lagos that their petition of November 25, 1950 and the report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council which sat earlier in March, 1950, had been fully considered but the Governor was not prepared to go beyond the term of his previous decision which was conveyed to them on October 31, 1950 and to which he had nothing to add.

In Owo Division, the towns and villages were divided into wards and each ward was represented by a member in the Council. The Owo Divisional Council was soon broken up into three Districts: Owo District Council (made up of Owo, Isuada, Idashen, Emure-Ile, Amunren, Iyere, Ipele, Arimogija, Ute, Elerenla and Okeluse), Irekari District Council (made up of Idoani, Idogun and Afo), and Ekamarun District Council (made up of Ifon, Ukaro, Imoru, Sobe and Ijagba). There was a general election to fill the

[78] The Olowo was accompanied on this trip by the Yeyesa, (his favorite wife), chief S.B. Aruwajoye, and Chief George Adetula, the Sashere of Owo.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

membership of these Councils. [79] In 1953, a member of each of these Councils was elected by the members of each Council as Chairman while the Olowo served as President. In accordance with the above, Owo District Council, which had one hundred elected members, elected Mr. M.A. Ajasin as its first Chairman.

From 1953, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Leader of the Action Group party of Nigeria [80] and of Government Business in the Western Region became the Premier of the region. Members of the Action Group Party (AG henceforth), constituted the membership of the first indigenous cabinet of the government of the region. Mr. Ajasin, a national Vice-President of the AG party and a professional educator, was slated for the position of Minister of Education in the new government of the Western Region. But he was already a member of the House of Representatives in Lagos for Owo and did not want to vacate his seat and as a result of that, the position of Minister of Education in the Western Region went to Chief S. O. Awokoya, another educator but from Ijebu Province. To compensate Owo, the Olowo Olateru Olagbegi was appointed a Minister without Portfolio and member of the West Regional House of Chiefs.[81]

Thus, in 1953, HH Oba Olateru Olagbegi became a Minister-Without-Portfolio in the government of the Western Region headed by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, leader of the Action Group Party of Nigeria. This was an honorific position for enhancing the prestige of persons deemed useful to the Government without giving them any specific duties to perform.

---

[79] The Akoko area had been excised from Owo at that point and that Council was also broken up into various District Councils.

[80] The Action Group party, an offshoot of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a Pan Yoruba Organization in the Western region of Nigeria became the dominant political party of the Yoruba people from its inception. The Party was formally launched at Owo in 1952. See Arifalo, Egbe Omo Oduduwa, 2001.

[81] For a long time, the only other Minister-Without-Portforlio and member of the West Regional House of Chiefs was HH Akenzua 11, the Oba of Benin.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Following the election into the Western House of Assembly in 1954, the Action Group led Government came into office. In 1958, the government required each and every local government in the region to submit a Chieftaincy Declaration and the Owo District Council had to submit a declaration of all the traditional chieftaincy titles within its jurisdiction, including that of the Olowo. After a thorough investigation, a document was prepared by the District Council, in accordance with Owo customs and traditions and the document was submitted to the government as a Chieftaincy Declaration for Owo. This document was approved by the government of the Western Region at Ibadan and each such Declaration became the basis for resolving chieftaincy disputes all over the region. This declaration omitted the position of the Ojomo.

By 1959, thousands of petitions had been written and delegations sent by members of the large Ojomo family and a dominant section of the Ijebu community, both to the Lagos Colony Government and the British government in England for the purpose of restoring the abolished Ojomo title.[82] Towards this end, early in 1959, the Right Honorable T.A.J. Ogunbiyi, CBE, [83] laid a petition before the Legislative Council in Lagos, praying that a Select Committee of the House be appointed to consider the petitions of the people of Ijebu Quarter and the Ojomo family. He said that his own petition was about the status and title of the Ojomo of Owo.[84] The chief Commissioner, Western Provinces, Sir

[82] During this period, Mr. Eleduma Ojomo, a lawyer and later, a magistrate in Lagos, Nigeria, led a delegation of the Ojomo family to 10 Downing Street, London and White Hall in London, to submit petitions regarding the restoration of the Ojomoship title.
[83] Not related to Owo but acting in the interest of justice
[84] NAI: The Nigerian Daily Times, March 14, 1959: 3

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chandos Hoskyns-Abraham, CMG, objected to the request of Hon. Ogunbiyi but the House decided to appoint a Select Committee, anyway.[85]

This Committee later submitted a recommendation that the Ojomo title not be abolished but the occupant of the position, henceforth, not wear a beaded crown in competition with the Olowo of Owo. The effect of this report was unpleasant in Owo. But the Legislative Council only made a recommendation to the Governor of the Western Provinces; it could not effect any action.

Although this recommendation was not binding, its impact was overwhelmingly favorable to the Ojomo camp. While it did not give them all that they wanted, which was the right of the Ojomo to wear a beaded crown as was originally proposed by the grantor of the Ojomo title, it gave them a ray of hope in their struggle for the restoration of the abolished title. The Governor of the Western Region could accept or reject the recommendation and the government, as expected, refused to entertain any request for the restoration of the Ojomo title but stuck to its previous position that the two sides accept the Oni recommendation.

Although the earlier recommendation appeared to be favorable to the Ojomo camp, yet because no action was taken by the colonial government to compel both sides to accept the recommendation and effectuate its terms, it did not amount to a bag of beans. Hence the continued agitation of the Ojomo camp for the full restoration of the title, which the Legislative Council appeared to be supporting. But owing to the enormous influence of the Olowo, Oba Olateru Olagbegi II, who was not only an Oba but a Minister- Without-Portfolio in the cabinet of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, it became

[85] The following were appointed members of the committee: Senior Resident Kano Province, (Chairman); Hon Sir Adesoji Aderemi, KBE, CMG, the Oni of Ife, member; Rt. Hon. TAJ Ogunbiyi, OBE, Member; Rt. Hon Bonwari Brown, OBE, member and Rt. Hon Aliyu Makaman-Bida, member.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

impossible to even think of implementing the Oni Commission's recommendation and so the people in Ijebu Quarter and members of the large Ojomo family continued to languish under heavy persecution and oppression.

In 1958, the Action Group party had decided to contest the Federal elections of 1959 and Awolowo had planned to become the Prime Minister of Nigeria if he could get the majority of the seats in the Federal House of Representatives. [86] In his efforts at winning the elections, Chief Obafemi Awolowo decided to wage a vigorous campaign and in this endeavor, he enjoined the field officers of the party not to leave any stone unturned in their efforts at winning the elections in their respective constituencies. He desired that all party candidates were returned victorious in their constituencies, particularly in the Western region, the home of the AG party.

The major opposition party to the AG in the West, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens, (NCNC henceforth), was running a very vigorous campaign all over Nigeria. The AG party was especially vulnerable in Owo Division because of two factors. First was the caliber of the candidate the NCNC party fielded. Mr. Richard A. Akinyemi, (*alias Obe*), a lawyer and a very effective campaigner, was barn -storming the whole Division and many people had begun to take notice of his efforts. Straw polls taken in Owo South constituency indicated that Akinyemi was running ahead of Ajasin in the Irekari District (Idoani and Idogun), his home base.

Second was the unending feud between the Olowo and the Ojomo families. Because of the bitterness generated by the proscription of the Ojomo title, almost all the people in Ijebu quarter had gravitated towards the NCNC party in previous elections and that had

[86] During his campaigns in 1959, Chief Obafemi Awolowo rented two French helicopters and used them to write slogans and propaganda statements in the sky all over Nigeria.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

made the party to do very well in Owo, the birthplace of the AG party.[87] Although the NCNC party had not won any Division wide elections in the past, in 1959, it stood the chance of winning if Akinyemi could garner the full support of the Irekari people in addition to the support of the Ijebu people. All politics are local and so the communal rift in Owo appeared to be a factor that could influence the outcome of the Federal elections of 1959 in Owo and in Nigeria as a whole. The AG party candidate, Ajasin, stood the chance of losing the election if nothing was done to wean away the Ijebu people from the NCNC and remove the base of the opposition party in the constituency.

In combating this problem, the local executive council of the AG decided to put out a feeler to the Ijebu people to find out what it would take to win them over to support the AG during the election. It was discovered that they only needed to be promised that the proscription of the Ojomo title would be looked into again later. In essence, this appeared to be a carrot, a vague promise that could be disavowed if the people of Ijebu insisted too strongly on their rights after the elections. No binding promises were to be made to the Ijebu people by the Owo AG party.

Although this was an overture that did not mean much to the local AG party, it was enough for the people of Ijebu quarter and they took the bait and they embraced the idea and promised to support the AG party thenceforth and, in fact, they came out openly to make a declaration to that effect. When the leader of the AG party, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, came to campaign in Owo in one of his helicopters in November, he was met

[87] The Action Group Party was launched by Chief Obafemi Awolowo in Owo in 1952. See The Nigerian Daily Times, May 3, 1951: 5.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

by the entire Owo community with the Ijebu people and their leader, Prince Kolapo Amaka, the pretender Ojomo, in attendance.[88]

Ajasin, the AG party candidate, won the election but Awolowo and the national AG party lost at the center. The party came up short of the winning majority. [89]

In December 1959, Olowo Olateru Olagbegi appeared to be one of the most popular Obas in the Western region of Nigeria and he was most beloved by his people at Owo. Every Owo citizen felt proud to be represented by such a gifted and physically well endowed individual as their traditional ruler. It did not appear that the king was threatened by the success of the AG party in Owo. If anything, it appeared that such success gave him more reason to enjoy political power and influence that he craved at the headquarters at Ibadan. He was one of the leading traditional rulers of the 1950s and the idea that he could be removed from his throne was the last thought in the minds of thoughtful people in Owo as he appeared secure and formidable on the throne. He was in the right party and all the important personalities in Owo were his friends and supporters.

However, the political landscape was changing. Since the turn of the century, the basis of power had shifted from the traditional authorities to the British colonial rulers and with the British policy of de-colonization in the 1960s, the basis of political power was being transferred into the hands of indigenous Africans but this time, the educated elites, not the traditional rulers, most of whom were illiterates. Even where the obas were literate, the dictates of democratization of the polity did not allow the obas to wield the absolute

[88] Incidentally, Kolapo Amaka was a known quantity to Awolowo as the latter had represented Mr. Amaka as his attorney when the Ojomo family sued the state for the restoration of the title in the early 1950s. The reception for Chief Obafemi Awolowo was on the Government school grounds.

[89] The Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) won 154 seats, the NCNC had 84 seats and the AG had 73 seats. The AG went into the opposition while the NPC and the NCNC entered a coalition partnership and formed the government. Awolowo then became the leader of Opposition at the Federal level and his Deputy, Chief S. L. Akintola, became the Premier of the West.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

power they wielded in the pre-colonial period. The new elites controlled the courts, (the judiciary), the legislative and the executive branches of government. The Premiers of the Regions were educated commoners and yet they had enormous power over the Emirs, Obas and Obis because of the new dispensation. From the point of colonial imposition, therefore, traditional institutions had begun their march into history.

On December 12, 1959, the AG party had a landslide victory in Owo because the Ijebu people, true to their promise, voted en masse for the Action Group candidate, Mr. Ajasin. Following the elections, there was a Christian worship service at the St. Andrew's Anglican Cathedral, Imola St, (Iloro Quarter), and all the churches and mosques in Owo, held services in thanksgiving to God and in celebration of the victory of the AG party.

It appears that, following this victory, Olowo Olateru Olagbegi had taken offense at the participation of the Ijebu people in the political process on the side of the AG party. Two weeks after the elections, the king called a meeting of the people of Owo town at the number one Court Hall. At the meeting, Oba Olateru Olagbegi, the Olowo of Owo, while sobbing, named some Owo elements that had conspired to drive him away from his throne. Among those named were Mr. M. A. Ajasin, Chief S. B. Aruwajoye, Messrs A. S. Olanusi, I. Olawole, Ogunmolawa, (alias Igboloro), E. S. Olaposi, and A. O. Fayemiwo. [90] All these people were members of the local executive council of the AG party, who took the resolution to invite the Ijebu people into the Action Group fold in 1959.

[90] Mr. Ajasin was the chairman of the Owo local AG party, the Owo District Council and a member for Owo in the House of Representatives in Lagos. Chief Aruwajoye, was the Deputy Chairman and member for Owo for Owo in the wets regional House of Assembly. During the time, Mr. Ademola Fayemiwo held the position of Organizing Secretary of the AG party in Owo Division. Except Mr. I. Olawole, every member of this group was from Iloro Quarter.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

At the meeting, called by the Olowo in the court hall, he cursed the group and told the people of Owo that he would do everything in his power to vanquish them. It is said that Chief Aruwajoye later told his friend, the Olowo, that there was no ulterior motive in what the group did. But the Olowo would not listen to him; he just ridiculed and berated his friend, Chief Aruwajoye, as an ignorant person who did not know the ways of so-called educated folks.[91] Chief Aruwajoye later became persuaded by his friend's insult and crossed over to the Olowo's thinking.[92]

In the case of Owo, the times have started to change. The Owo District Council was becoming the forum for establishing responsible democratic government in the area. In the particular case of Owo, for many years it was the practice of a particular public official to collect payment vouchers for the salaries of the laborers, house helps and other people working in his residence, amounting to hundreds of pounds sterling, a lot of money in those days, to pay these workers himself. On inquiring from the workers, they told investigators that they never knew that they were on the Council's pay roll at all. In 1959, Mr. A. S. Olanusi, Chairman of the Council's Works Committee responsible for awarding contracts by the Council and the payment of salaries, started to make inquiries about these payments. It turned out also that some of the contracts awarded to a particular bidder and paid for by the Council were not performed. All of those were turning up at the wrong places.

The alienated group's offense, therefore, seems to be that they were trying to introduce effective and accountable local government to Owo. They also wanted full participation

[91] Personal Communications.
[92] Mr. 'Billy 'Ibidapo of Igboroko Quarter, a relation of Chief S. B. Aruwajoye, personal communications, 1968.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

of all citizens in the political process. But much of the burden of traditional government was still being born by the traditional elites and both could not co-exist.

On December 12, 1959, the AG party had a landslide victory in Owo because the Ijebu. By 1960, the rift within the AG party in Owo had become so serious that it necessitated the intervention of the National Executive Council of the AG party at Ibadan. As time went on, it would require the intervention of the Western Regional Council of Obas and Chiefs. The most prominent obas, led by the Oni of Ife, Sir Adesoji Aderemi, came to Owo to make peace but to no avail. Later, members of the Executive Council of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a Pan-Yoruba Cultural Organization, also came to Owo to intervene, without success. The Ajasin camp then prevailed upon Chief George Adetula, the Sashere of Owo, whom they thought had some influence with the Olowo, to appeal to him on their behalf. In his attempt to settle the rift, the Olowo just rolled over chief Sashere like a hurricane. He lumped him up with those he called '*olote*', meaning '*conspirators.*' [93] The old man was astounded and as a result of this harsh treatment by the monarch, Chief Sashere Adetula decided to pitch his tent with the alienated group. The Ajasin camp then seized that opportunity and made him,[94] their spokesman thenceforth. Chief Sashere Adetula advised the group to go out, to every nook and corner of Owo Division, to explain their own side of the matter otherwise they were politically finished in Owo if they kept quiet. The Ajasin camp took the advice and embarked on a six-month tour of

[93] The Olowo told chief Sashere in no uncertain terms that if he did not pitch his camp with him in his efforts to destroy the conspirators, he (Sashere) too will be destroyed with the clique. In Owo parlance, the Kabiyesi said, 'Ti a ba pa esa, a pa epo to ba hu si abe re,' meaning: 'when we remove the grass, we also remove the weed that grows with it.' Personal Communications.

[94] This was a very strategic move on the part of the Ajasin group otherwise they were about to be stoned by the people for threatening their ruler. Chief Sashere explained their position and promised the Owo people that if Olateru would relent, no power would threaten his throne or position.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Owo Division starting with the five quarters of Owo town, including the core areas of Owo proper to explain their position to the people.

The election into the West Regional House of Assembly was to take place in August 1960. By March of that year, the Olowo's camp had secured the use of the AG party symbol, the palm tree. Mr. Ajasin, a national Vice –President of the AG party was denied the use of the AG symbol and he was greatly disappointed but he refused to support the 'official' AG candidate for Owo, Chief Stephen Baba Aruwajoye. Since the gulf between the two camps within the AG party in Owo could not be bridged, the Ajasin camp decided to fight the election by fielding an independent candidate with the symbol of cocoa pod. Mr. Ademola Fayemiwo, the erstwhile organizing secretary of the AG party, then became the flag bearer and ran as an independent candidate (AG) for the Ajasin camp.

It was apparent that whoever had the AG symbol would win the election and so it became an uphill task for the Ajasin camp to convince the people of Owo not to vote for the 'official' AG party at that election but to vote for the independent candidate who was the genuine AG party candidate. Because of their failure to convince the people to that line of thinking, the Ajasin camp lost the election.[95] In that West regional election, the Action Group party won and Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola, who had replaced Awolowo as Premier of the Western Region in 1959, retained his position. In 1961, in the local elections into the Owo District Council, the Ajasin camp again fielded independent

[95] In spite of the odds against the Ajasin camp, Fayemiwo polled 7,400 votes to Aruwajoye's 11, 300 votes because of the latter's use of the AG party symbol.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

candidates in all the wards in Owo, using the same cocoa symbol and lost. The 'official' AG candidates again swept the polls.[96]

Between July and December 1962, a state of emergency was declared in the Western region by the Federal Government of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Prime Minister of Nigeria. As a result of the emergency situation, the councils in the region were dissolved. In the same year, Oba Olateru Olagbegi received an accolade from her Majesty, the Queen of England, Elizabeth 11, and was conferred a Knighthood (Knight of the British Empire, KBE) and in 1963, he was elected the President of the House of Chiefs of the Western Region.[97] Sir Olateru Olagbegi was at the peak of his power. The Olowo had all but vanquished his self created adversaries. In retrospect, this was a chimera as it was an ephemeral climb to the top.

In 1963, the United People's Party, (UPP henceforth) of Chief S. L. Akintola and the rump of the NCNC party in the west, formed a coalition government in the Western region under the Premiership of Chief S.L. Akintola, with Chief Remi Fani-Kayode as Deputy Premier. This government brought back the Owo District Council and Rev. Adako was elected the Chairman of the council. The Irekari and the Ekamarun District councils became autonomous entities and their severance brought an end to the Owo Divisional Council. Between 1962 and 1966, Owo District Council was controlled by the new party formed as a result of the fusion of the UPP and the NCNC to form the new

[96] Even Mr. Ajasin himself lost his council seat in his ward at Iloro quarter. As a result, he lost his position as the chairman of the council.
[97] He held that position till the military putsch of January 15, 1966.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). [98] In 1963, Mr. Rufus D. Ojowa then became the Chairman of the Council. [99]

Earlier in 1962, a rift had developed between Chief Obafemi Awolowo and his deputy, Chief S.L. Akintola. Among other issues leading to this rift was Akintola's stand on the relationship between the AG party and the other political parties in Nigeria. It it alleged that Akintola had advocated an alignment between the AG and the Northern Peoples Congress, (NPC henceforth) led by Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto and Premier of the vast northern region, the home of the Hausa/Fulani but Awolowo thought otherwise. That year, Awolowo, along with some members of his party echelon, was arrested by the Federal Government of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa on trumped up treasonable felony charges. This action was preceded by a fracas in the old Western House of Assembly in which many members of the AG party were injured in a deliberately staged disturbance and a state of emergency was declared in the western region. Under the emergency powers conferred on the sole administrator of the region, Dr. Majekodunmi, Awolowo was restricted to the swampy and humid Lekki area and Akintola was restricted to the pristine, blissful woodland of Olokemeji. Six months later, Akintola was returned to the Premiership of the Western Region and Awolowo faced charges of treasonable felony. Later that year, Awolowo and some of his supporters were found guilty of these charges and sentenced to long stretches of imprisonment with hard labor.

Meanwhile, at Owo, the Olowo Olateru Olagbegi, had started to denounce Awolowo and had embraced Akintola, who had then become the leader of a new party, the NNDP.

---

[98]The NNDP led government under the premiership of Akintola controlled all the councils in the Western region during this period

[99] He held the position until the first military coup of January 15, 1966.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ajasin and members of his camp remained loyal to the AG party and, in fact, they then became what were left of the AG party in Owo.

As hinted above, between 1962 and 1966, Olowo Olateru Olagbegi made so many dicey strides in his political career that were really dizzying to observers. He had been a Minister-Without-Portfolio in the old Awolowo government from 1953 but in 1963, as the negative political drama was unfolding in the country, he became the President of the West Regional House of Chiefs. He was knighted by the Queen of England and had to be addressed, Sir Olateru Olagbegi. He also made a second tour of the British Isles and returned to Owo in triumph. [100]

In 1963, although Akintola continued his career as Premier of the Western Region, his position was tenuous, at best. His political fortune, which had been very promising since he started his association with Awolowo, became precarious as he was not accepted by the Yoruba people, who had thought that he was selling them out to the other ethnic groups. He had aligned himself with the Hausa/Fulani oligarchy at the Federal level and his activities were generally viewed as perfidious and disloyal. Some of his detractors had started to call him a traitor to his ethnic group in a multi cultural society such as Nigeria. He was booed every where he went in the Western region as he appeared to be selling his people short and for a mere porridge. He was particularly odious to the majority of the people of Owo.

In 1965, when he toured parts of Owo, Akintola was booed and heckled by the people at Isho and he reported the incident to the Olowo, Sir Olateru Olagbegi, a Justice of the Peace, and the latter is said to have promised to do something about it. Shortly thereafter,

[100] NAI: The Nigerian Daily Times, August 4, 1963: 6. Sir Olateru Olagbegi bought a new set of wheels, Rolls Royce, an appropriate means of transportation for a member of the British Peerage.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Chief (Mrs.) Faderera Akintola, wife of the Premier, was also booed at Amunren, near Isho. The children, who were made to line up for the 'august visitor,' booed her and as they were being pursued to be arrested by the security detail around Mrs. Akintola, the children dropped their books. The books were scooped up and taken to Ibadan. In the evening of that day, one of the supporters of the NNDP at Isho started an argument with his neighbors, and his house was razed to the ground. He ran to Owo for help and the Olowo, as the Justice of the Peace (JP) of the area, called the Police headquarters at Akure and requested that they go to Isho to put down a riot there. The police were to kill whoever opposed them. [101] That night, eleven people were shot dead and the people of Isho were put to flight into the bush. In the morning of December 10, 1965, Isho was a ghost town. Many people in Owo were alarmed at the turn of events in the area.

Apart from the Isho people, many people in Owo suffered at the hands of law enforcement agencies during the time because of the people's continued support for Awolowo and his party, the Action Group. The truncated remnants of the AG party in Owo were again led by Ajasin.[102]

An indication that the tide of political power in Owo had changed started to show with the Federal Elections of 1964. With Ajasin back in the saddle in the AG fold and the other group then in the NNDP party, the Ajasin faction swept the polls and Ajasin himself was re-elected to the House of Representatives in Lagos in a landslide against Mr. Oseni.. With this victory, the Ajasin faction became the majority party again in Owo. However, the Olowo, the traditional ruler of Owo, who was expected to be neutral in partisan politics but like the other traditional rulers in the Western Region at the time,

[101] The police spokesman, Mr. Esan, said that he was instructed to raze the town because of their rebellion.
[102] That was the time of 'wet e,' meaning: 'pour gasoline on an object or person and set it on fire,' in the old Western Region.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

was heavily involved in partisan politics and waded in forcefully in support of the NNDP party. But this time, he was on the side of an unpopular minority party, the NNDP (The Nigerian National Democratic Party) headed by Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola..

In 1965, during the regional elections into the West Regional House of Assembly at Ibadan, in spite of its glaring unpopularity in the region, the NNDP 'swept' the polls. The NNDP party 'won' by rigging the elections. In the case of Owo, the Returning Officer, Mr. Ladapo Ogunleye, disappeared or made himself inaccessible to the AG candidate for Owo, Mr. E. S. Olanusi during the filing of nomination period for the election. While Chief Aruwajoye, the NNDP, candidate had access to the Returning Officer and was able to submit his papers to him before the deadline date, the other candidate could not and so Chief Aruwajoye was declared elected 'unopposed.' This was the pattern all over the Western Region in 1965.

This action provoked the worst kind of disturbances all over the Western Region in 1965. There were rioting and mayhem all over the region. The 'rigging of elections' as the practice was known was deemed an electoral fraud by the people and since the police and other governmental functionaries were part of the rigging process, the people had no other recourse than to riot and cause other disturbances. Houses were set on fire and political opponents such as political party agents seen as actively involved in the rigging process were doused with gasoline and burnt alive.[103] The Western Region of Nigeria then earned the sobriquet of the 'WILD, WILD WEST' as most parts of the region went up in flames. For this electoral practice, there were reports that some NNDP political party agents were beheaded in Ondo, Idanre, Ilesha and Oshogbo towns. In Owo, the

[103] This practice was known as *'wet e ko yan gburu,'* meaning: 'Douse with gasoline and roast till it gets crunchy.'

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

home of the Returning Officer, Mr. Ogunleye, a judge of the Customary Court Grade 'B' in Owo, was ransacked and destroyed. After escaping assassination, he left Owo and never returned. It was a dark period in the history of Owo, Yorubaland and Nigeria.

In the midst of the troubles and problems, on January 15, 1966, a dissident section of the Nigerian Army, led by Major Chukuma Nzegwu, attacked the residence of Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto and Premier of the Northern Region in Kaduna and he was killed. In Lagos, the whereabouts of the Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa and his Minister of Finance, Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh, were unknown. They were later reported dead after their bodies were found in the bush in the outskirts of the city of Lagos. In Ibadan, Akintola was shot dead by the soldiers sent to apprehend him to the jubilation of the majority of the people of the Western region.

In January, 1966, shortly following the fall of the Akintola government in Ibadan, a massive agitation against the continued rule of Sir Olateru Olagbegi as Olowo of Owo developed into a movement in Owo. A group known as the Owo Community headed by Mr. M. A. Ajasin started a petition drive against the Olowo Olateru Olagbegi 11 and demanded his removal. The group, made up of very prominent citizens of Owo at home and abroad, listed some allegations of misrule, oppression and lack of accountability against the Olowo and demanded that he be removed from office forthwith. Lt. Col. Adekunle Fajuyi, (who hailed from Ado-Ekiti, present Ekiti state), the then Governor of the Western Region, received the petitions along with a new demand for the restoration of the Ojomo title from the people of Owo and he immediately suspended the Olowo from office, restricting him to Okitipupa, a town in the swampy and humid waterside part of present day Ondo state.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Between January and June, 1966, the new Head of State, Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi inaugurated a unified government for the federation of Nigeria to the chagrin of the Hausa/Fulani. In July, another military inspired coup took place and a new government headed by a young Army officer, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon came to power. Four days later, the new Head of State, Yakubu Gowon, released Chief Obafemi Awolowo from prison and appointed him the Vice-Chairman of the Executive Council and the Federal Minister of Finance of Nigeria, in other words, the Prime minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

. In the July 1966 coup, Fajuyi, the Governor of the Western Provinces, was killed along with Ironsi, the first Military Head of State of Nigeria. The new Federal Military Government headed by Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon in Lagos appointed Col. Adeyinka Adebayo as the new Governor of the Western Region in place of Lt. Col. Adekunle Fajuyi. Later, Col. Adebayo freed the Olowo Olagbegi II from restriction at Okitipupa and allowed him to reside in his own personal home in Bodija, Ibadan. But, in 1968, the Olowo, thinking that his release meant that he could return to his throne, sought permission from Col. Adebayo to return to his throne at Owo. The Governor gave his permission under the condition that the Olowo's proposed return must not lead to any disturbance of the peace at Owo. But when the Olowo tried to return to his throne without first reconciling himself with his people at Owo, his return was met with riots and mayhem by his adversaries. The Owo Community group, led by the then Mr. Adekunle Ajasin, started a riot and Sir Olateru barely escaped with his life. Many houses belonging to his supporters were set on fire and Owo was once again in flames. In response to the events at Owo, Col. Robert Adeyinka Adebayo, the military Governor of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

the Western State then deposed Sir Olateru.[104] After all the rioting had stopped, a new Olowo was appointed. Chief Joseph Adekola Ogunoye, the Obayoriade of Owo, then became the Olowo Ogunoye 11. Immediately following his installation, Ogunoye signed the instrument restoring the Ojomo title and in 1970, a new Ojomo, chief Ademola (German) Ojomo, Aruliwo 11, was installed.

This chapter has presented a summary of political developments in Yorubaland and Nigeria with a particular focus on the Owo kingdom under British rule and following Nigeria's independence, up to 1970.

[104] Personal note: it is remarkable to see how Sir Olateru Olagbegi behaved himself during his ordeal spanning a period of twenty five years in exile away from the throne. He kept the path of peace and did not avenge himself against his adversaries and detractors. He displayed a class act and a statesmanlike conduct. This writer met the monarch several times during the period and became sympathetic to his plight because of his class act.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSION

Summary of Owo history, c1170-c1970

This study has focused on the history of the Owo kingdom, especially on its history as a frontier Yoruba kingdom located in the borderlands of the Yoruba- and Edo-speaking peoples of West Africa, from the 12th to the 20th century. In exploring the pre-colonial history of the Owo kingdom, I have shown how the early Owo kingdom developed in a way that parallels most other Yoruba kingdoms, but then its model of government diverged with its interactions with Benin beginning in the 15th century.

The Yoruba are among the largest ethnic groups of Africa, occupying a territory, before British colonial rule, roughly the size of France and today, numbering about 30 million people. Throughout their known history, before British rule was imposed on them in the last decade of the 19th century, the Yoruba had lived in many small kingdoms – just as the Germans had lived in many small states before Bismarck's unification of Germany in 1870.[1]

The manner of the evolution of the Yoruba kingdoms carved out a peculiar structure for their kingdoms. Each kingdom was made up of a central city, the king's city, and a few subordinate towns and villages.[2] The king's city constituted the totality of his kingdom at first and from these the subordinate towns and villages were founded or added. It was in the king's city, therefore, that each kingdom's unwritten constitution evolved. Thus, each king's city started off as a plurality- an amalgamation of many

[1] Taylor, A. J. P., The Struggle for Mastery in Europe in the 19th century, London, 1965: 56-79.
[2] Smith, R. S. Kingdoms of the Yoruba, London, Methuen, 1969: 32

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ancient small groups, each organized as a kingdom under its own ruler. [3] The amalgamations of these state-lets to produce the king's cities took place between the 10th and the 15th century.[4] In each case, the amalgamation resulted in the emergence of a king accepted by all, but it did not destroy the identity of the pre-existent groups.[5] Therefore, the constitution evolved in such a way as to give recognition to every pre-existent group – so that their leaders became the chiefs in the new kingdom, under the headship of the king. The typical unwritten constitution of a Yoruba kingdom was therefore characterized by careful checks, balances and compromises.[6] Though each Yoruba kingdom built great rituals and ceremonies around its king, the king's authority had to be exercised only in the context of a sophisticated system of checks and balances.

The Owo kingdom was one of these kingdoms of the Yoruba people.[7] It was located in the deep forests of the southeastern fringes of Yorubaland. Its location in the junction of many forest routes helped it to develop early into one of the richest and most influential kingdoms of the eastern Yoruba forests. Its indigenous unwritten constitution was typically Yoruba.[8]

Immediately to the south east of the territory of the Owo kingdom was the country of a non-Yoruba people, the Edo. By the time that Owo was in its infancy, the Edo people, all united into one single kingdom, the Benin kingdom, had evolved for their kingdom an unwritten constitution with strong centralized and near monarchical absolutism.[9] Under

---

[3] Biobaku, S. O., Egba and her Neighbors, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965; Sources in Yoruba History, Oxford, 1973
[4] Smith, Kingdoms
[5] Biobaku, Egba
[6] Johnson, Samuel, The History of the Yorubas, CSS, Lagos, 2001: 56
[7] Smith, Kingdoms
[8] Beeley, J. H., Intelligence Report on Ifon/Owo Districts, NAI, CSO 26/299656
[9] Bradbury, R. E., Benin Studies, London, 1967

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

its kings, the Benin kingdom began early to expand.[10] Then European traders came to the coast of Benin in the late 15th century, and the growth of Benin City, as the main center of European trade with its hinterland greatly boosted its wealth and power. [11]

The rulers of the Owo kingdom, like the rulers of the other Yoruba kingdoms, claim to have descended from the ruler of Ife - Oduduwa, and there is a detailed tradition of migration of the rulers of Owo from Ile-Ife all the way to Owo.[12] Thereafter or about the same time of this migration, smaller migrations of Yoruba and non-Yoruba peoples came into the forests around Owo and they were all assimilated into the Owo system as what is today referred to as the Owo kingdom.[13] While this was happening, Owo soon became aware of the existence of a much stronger kingdom to the southeast-the kingdom of Benin. Starting first as traders, Benin people started to come into Owo and Owo people also went to Benin to trade. But at some point, the stronger power of Benin started to attempt to establish its control over Owo and there ensued probably centuries of warfare, of constant warfare broken off by peace treaties and agreements that produced brief periods of respite for both sides when trade again flowed freely and then there would be another quintessence of hostilities and so on and so forth. And so in the midst of all these, the challenge to Owo produced a situation in which the Owo became strong and well organized for war and in course of time became an expansionist kingdom in its own right, attempting to conquer its own neighbors. [14] By the time that we come to the 18th century, the Owo kingdom was already a very strong kingdom and independent on

[10] Egharevba, J. U. Short History of Benin, Ibadan, 1960.
[11] Ryder, A. F. C., Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897, London, 1969.
[12] Ashara, M. B. The History of Owo, Owo, 1951
[13] Beeley, Intelligence Report.
[14] See chapters six and seven

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

its own and able also to control other non-Owo people in the forests of eastern Yorubaland.

But imperceptibly and in a surreptitious way, Edo influence grew in the life, culture and politics of Owo. Growing trade with Benin transformed Owo into the entrepot of Yorubaland's trade with the coast through Benin, thus increasing the importance and influence of Owo in the affairs of Yorubaland. Slowly at first, and then increasingly, Benin ways began to impact the unwritten, indigenous Yoruba constitution of the Owo kingdom. After the Benin kingdom attacked Owo in attempts to pull Owo under Benin, Benin's influence on Owo grew more markedly. Even though the Owo kingdom managed to preserve its independence, Owo's frontier location had made her a target of Benin.

Benin culture increasingly impacted Owo's Yoruba culture. Benin traders freely resided in Owo and Owo traders in Benin. Owo's Yoruba dialect increasingly picked up Edo accretions. In some instances, Owo people started to provide interlocutors for Benin activities among the other Yoruba kingdoms and settlements.[15] Some of Owo's kings began to introduce changes that tended to move the Owo monarchical system in the direction of the Benin system. Most importantly, as part of an arrangement which Owo had to agree to in order to preserve her independence, Owo young princes went to live in the palace of Benin for short periods in their youth. When one such prince named Oshogboye returned from the Benin palace in about c1602 and ascended the throne of Owo, Owo's monarchy moved very significantly in the direction of the Benin monarchy.

[15]In such instances, Owo elements interpreted and interceded in the Benin (Edo) language in resolving disputes between the Yoruba and the Benin. They also joined Benin forces in trading ventures and the establishment of Benin authority. For example, in the establishment of the fishing village that later became Eko (Lagos) in the 17th century. Pa Justus Okoro, 70, interview.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

In order to build up his Owo kingdom and equip it to be able to stand up to the Benin kingdom, Oshogboye proceeded to build Benin's type of great city walls, Benin's type of military establishments, Benin's type of king with power to establish and empower chieftaincies directly linked to the king, chieftaincies arbitrarily elevated in dignity and functions above older chieftaincies.

The indigenous political system of Owo was being subverted, but most of the Owo people did not seem to notice at first. They were too happy with the new power of their kingdom, especially with its new ability to threaten attack and control its weaker Yoruba neighbors. However, over time, the indigenous system stirred itself. The chiefs, by many acts and stratagems, attempted to reassert their customary positions and authority. Even the holders of the exalted new chieftaincies created by the kings tended, usually, to turn around and resist excessive claims by the kings. It then developed that the kings would strike out and grab power and the chiefs would try to curtail them by grabbing more powers. As the pendulum swung excessively, one direction and then another, disruptive structures emerged of which a special royal title, the Ojomo title, was created by the king. Without knowing it, the king was creating a sort of second king for the kingdom. By the time the kings recognized this, the Ojomos had become too powerful and too influential to be curbed, and this cloud has hung over Owo's political life until our times.

Owo: a Frontier Kingdom

The use of frontier to mean 'a region at the edge of a settled area' is a special American development. During most of American history, the edge of the settled country was the place where unlimited cheap land was available to anyone willing to live the hard but

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

independent life of the pioneer farmer. It has long been recognized that the experience of frontier life had an important part in shaping American society and character. Frederick Jackson Turner was the first American historian to effectively express the American frontier with reference to American history. [16] According to Turner, the frontier experience was the most decisive factor in the development of American history and culture with values of rugged individualism and independence. This frontier thesis shows how a tidal wave of people swept through and remade societies, and indeed created new groups and literally supplanted, if not obliterating the pre-existing groups and cultures, which were represented as being of little or no account.

Thus, the genesis of the frontier perspective can be traced to Turner's notion of the 'frontier,' to which he assigned a major role in the shaping of the American political character. Boldly stated, Turner's thesis seems to suggest that the frontier determined the salient features of the American national character. A question which then arises is this: does the frontier everywhere produce the same results? Or is the frontier generally a cause?

We have seen how some scholars, from Murdock [17]and Oliver[18] to Clark[19] and Fagan[20] have applied the tidal wave model to Africa, especially while discussing the peopling of the continent in the Nilotic and Bantu migrations. But how far can we carry this? How well can this perspective or thesis be applied to Africa, to Yorubaland, and more specifically, to Owo history? To what extent was the frontier a natural force of socio-

[16] Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The significance of the Frontier in American History.'
[17] Murdock, George P., Africa: Its Peoples and Their Culture History, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959
[18] Oliver, R., The Dawn of African History, London: Oxford University Press, 1968.
[19] Clark, John D, The Prehistory of Africa, London: Thames and Hudson, 1970.
[20] Fagan, Brian and Roland Oliver, Africa in the Iron Age: c500BC-c1400AD, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

cultural transformation, and to what extent was it one of socio-economic and political continuity and conservatism?

Historians do not believe that the frontier produces the same results everywhere and they also do not believe that the frontier is a cause. While Turner's frontier thesis sees the frontier as a natural force for cultural transformation in America, in the case of Africa, it will be argued that the frontier may also be a force for culture–historical continuity and conservatism. The frontier perspective in this case is that of the local frontier, lying at the fringes of the numerous established African societies. It will be argued further that it is on such frontiers that most African polities and societies have been 'constructed' out of the bits and pieces in human and cultural aspects of existing societies. This posits a process in which incipient small polities are produced by other similar and usually more complex societies. As pointed out by Kopytoff, this is contrary to the concepts which see African political development as arising out of some hypothetical archaic bands roaming over a hypothetical pre-historic landscape.[21]

We also see a second part of the frontier argument: the formation and transformation of the socio-political culture of the Owo people as a result of her frontier location. Theoretically, the model of the Yoruba political culture, first advanced by Lloyd,[22] is characterized by the politics of checks and balances between the king representing the royal elements, on the one hand, and the lineage chiefs, representing the non-royal –usually the most populous group, on the other. A good example of this is the

[21] Kopytoff , Igor, (ed.), The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1987:3

[22] Lloyd, P.C., 'The Political Development of Yoruba Kingdoms in the 18th and 19th centuries,' Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Occasional Paper, # 31, London, 1971.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

case of the *Alaafin* versus the *Oyomesi.* [23] This is the classic example of the Yoruba political system of conciliar government. While the *Olowo* versus the *Ighare* could be cited as representing this classic model in the history of Owo, in reality, this comparison is only valid for the early periods. The creation of the 'new chiefs' of the Inner Council (appointed by the Olowo and thus loyal to him), from the 14th century onwards and their dominance of the political spheres ensure the near complete subversion and undermining of the power and influence of the Ighare chiefs in later years.

In Owo history and politics, the one dominant factor was a continuous and sustained division within the royal family, to which the chiefs were drawn in at different times and in different coalitions to protect, expand and maximize their own interests and power. Thus, except in the very early period of Owo history rarely was the focus of politics and of the economy one of conflict between the king and the chiefs. Law has pointed out this type of competitiveness between the royal and non-royal elements in his study of the old Oyo Empire.[24] However, the Owo case is a major departure from the Yoruba model and patterns discussed by Law in his work. What factors made Owo develop in this way and how and why did Owo develop in this direction? What is the theoretical significance of this departure in the interpretation of Owo and Yoruba history? This study has attempted to answer these and other related questions. It has also dealt with other issues which are subsumed in this study: external relations, with particular reference to Benin and her impact on Owo, the salience of the socio-economic factors in the formation of states and societies in Yorubaland, arts and crafts, trade and commerce, farming and industry- in

[23] Johnson, S. The History of the Yoruba, Atanda, J. A., The 'New Oyo Empire,' Law, R., The Oyo Empire, c1600-c1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade, Oxford, 1991.
[24] Law, The Oyo Empire.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

essence the political economy of state formation. This also includes the 19th century Yoruba wars and the re-incorporation of Owo into the Yoruba world and politics, the significance of British rule within the framework of all other and previous intrusions and contacts and the incorporation of Owo into modern Nigerian politics. In order to make sense of all these issues we have developed a superstructure, one connecting research question which puts all these issues together in a question which makes a sense of the development of the socio –political and economic culture in Owo from the earliest times to the 1970s.

To restate the major research question- how does an African kingdom, part of a large cultural group or nationality but located on the frontier with another cultural group (organized under one single powerful kingdom), handle the issues of its existence and benefit from its location? What challenges did it face because of its location, and how did it respond to them and what were the consequences of her chosen responses? How did these consequences impact her growth as a state, her economic life, her culture, her internal politics, her interaction with her weaker neighbors, her handling of difficulties, etc? What differences did all these import into Owo's character that made her stand somewhat distinct and unique in the general Yoruba mass?

The most important thing to note in Owo's history is that, even, in the midst of all the political pains, the Owo kingdom continued to be rich and powerful. Its well-entrenched position on the trade routes was a major factor in this continued wealth and strength. By the 19th century, Owo was far and away the richest kingdom in eastern Yorubaland. Perhaps the most important factor was the skill of diplomacy which Owo had acquired from the demands of her location near the Benin kingdom. For centuries, Owo had to be

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

able to relate to its more powerful, expansionist neighbor, Benin, in ways that prevented hostility with Benin and yet preserved Owo's independence. It was an incredibly tight diplomatic rope- and, on the whole, Owo walked it again and again with adroitness and to success. At the same time, Owo must show itself to the more powerful kingdoms of the Yoruba country as a trading center that could be depended upon to sustain their interests in the growing coastal trade of which Owo was a major entrepot for the Yoruba people.

Owo's diplomatic adroitness came in particularly useful in the 19th century when political troubles erupted in Yorubaland from the first years of that century. By about c1850, one new Yoruba state, Ibadan, had grown enormously powerful. By the 1860s, Ibadan began to conquer and control almost all of eastern Yorubaland. Ibadan conquered all the kingdoms around Owo, but Owo managed to remain at peace and independent, content to lose to Ibadan her territorial claims far from home. Owo became a great source of supply of arms and ammunition to Ibadan, while at the same time being the great source of supply to the kingdoms busy fighting against Ibadan.

Of all the kingdoms of eastern Yorubaland, Owo was demonstrably the most valuable to Ibadan and there was no doubt that Ibadan could easily smash Owo. Yet, an Ibadan attack never happened, and Owo never ceased selling arms to both Ibadan and its enemies. Owo's diplomatic skills operated at their very finest. As a result of Owo's long freedom from external aggression, Owo continued to be rich and powerful. Owo also became a center of culture, arts and crafts. In sculptural arts, cloth weaving, bead setting, music and songs, Owo became one of the most prolific cities of the Yoruba people.

Under the British, and even in the context of independent Nigeria, the tumultuous nature of Owo's politics has not changed. More than any other Yoruba kingdom, Owo

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

has been, in modern times, a place of sudden, even violent, political developments and eruptions. But Owo remains a main center of Yoruba cultural advance in education and the arts.

Recommendations for future research

The following issues need further investigation and analysis:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

1. The people called 'Lucumi' in the written historical literature on the African / Yoruba people
2. Owo as a case study of the nature and significance of the frontier experience in African history.
3. Comparative Study in Society and History. Owo in comparison with other parts of Yorubaland. Except in the very early period of Owo history, rarely do we find the focus of politics and of the economy being one of conflict and competition between the royal and non-royal elements as in other Yoruba kingdoms. Is this not a major departure from the classical Yoruba model and patterns? How and why did Owo develop in this direction? What is the theoretical significance of this departure in the interpretation of Owo and Yoruba history?
4. Inter- Group Relations and Diplomacy. Owo Diplomacy and External relations- the development of Owo kingdom, with particular reference to Benin and her dealings with and impact on Owo.
5. The salience of the socio-economic factors in the formation of states and societies in Yorubaland- Arts and crafts, trade and commerce, farming and industry, etc. in essence the political economy of state formation.
6. Owo's Response to change: the 19th century history of Owo during the Yoruba wars and the re-incorporation of Owo into the Yoruba world and politics?
7. British colonialists as a new 'face' in the Owo tradition of handling neighboring powers. The significance of British rule within the framework of all other and previous intrusions and contacts. The need to put the British colonial impact in proper perspective

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

8. British rule and the incorporation of Owo into modern Nigerian politics.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

The sources used for this study are of various kinds and these include archival materials such as the Intelligence Report on Owo/ Ifon Districts by J.H. Beeley. This report is very important to this study because it contains some rare information on the history of Owo. The British administrators compiled the report after a thorough investigation of the social organization and economy of Owo districts in the 1930s. In addition, I have consulted the Annual reports compiled by individual Colonial Officers, particularly the Handing-Over Notes. Other sources used include Assessment Reports and other reports on chieftaincy and land/boundary disputes which call for a recital of oral traditions for arbitration purposes.

The second categories of materials used are written sources of various types such as journal articles, books and unpublished dissertations on aspects of Owo history. Included in this category of sources are local histories. The two most important ones are Chief M.B. Ashara's The History of Owo, Owo, 1952 and Chief J.U. Egharevba's A Short History of the Benin Kingdom, Ibadan, 1934 (1960, edn.) These two works are particularly important to this study because they contain information on Owo-Benin relations dating back to the 15th century. Because of the coincidence of the information in both works on these two neighboring polities, they tend to provide a corroborative evidence for the events they report.

The third category of sources I used is oral traditions. I obtained these traditions informally as I was growing up in Owo and the rest I obtained through direct, formal interviews of people with such knowledge between 1983 and 1987, while teaching at the former Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti. (See list of interviewees below). I also

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

obtained more information through direct interviews on short visits to the research area between 1999 and 2004. A sample of the products of such interviews is included in the appendix.

Primary Sources

Oral

Interviewees:

1. Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin, 04-09-84
2. Sir Olateru Olagbegi, (Olowo of Owo, 1941-1968; 1993-1998), 05-08-85
3. Oba Joseph Adekola Ogunoye, (Olowo of Owo, 1968-1998), 09-25-84
4. Chief John Eleduma, (Agunloye 11, Ojomo of Owo, 1982-2000), 06-07-86
5. Chief Abraham Ojo, (Elerewe of Owo), 08-21-85
6. Chief Justus Alago Adetula, (Sashere of Owo), 07-15-85
7. Pa Arobo Sumanu, (Olori –ebi, Sashere Compound), 07-12-85
8. Hon. Z.O.K. Adetula, Esq., Owo community leader, 12-13-84
9. Chief Otegbeye Owoputi, (Asolo of Owo), 09-16-86
10. Chief Abraham Daramola, (Akowa of Iloro quarter), 08-04-84
11. Chief Justus Okoro, (Aragwagbaiye of Igboroko quarter), 09-14-86
12. Alhaji Aladesawe, (Chief Imam of Owo), 07-03-84
13. Chief Tijani, (Olokungboye of Ijebu-Owo), 06-03-85
14. Chief Adafin Fayemiwo of Iloro quarter, (primary mentor, 1958-1966)
15. Chief M. B Ogunbodede, (Ashara of Owo), 07-12-86
16. Madam Eunice Tinuade (nee Fayemiwo, mother), 08-20-99/05-20-2004
17. Chief Ademola Osho, 05-12-84/04-23-87

Narratives

Songs at the Ogunro, Igogo festival, Agwe Festival, Ero, and Ulabi ceremonies and recitations at these ceremonies depicting Owo history, historical incidents involving Owo external relations, internal politics and dispute, chieftaincy succession disputes, 'orin ote' - 'songs of controversy,' etc. Ogunro (i.e. Ijesu), the Igogo festival, Agwe, Ero, Ulabi, 'Orun ri ru,' (i.e. worshipping of the Olowo's head, with kolanuts, and others. In addition to specific details of events in the history of Owo and her relations with her neighbors, I collected Owo songs, recitations, idioms, proverbs, jokes, incantations, cognomen, nicknames, narratives, and short stories.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Written

List of Archival Materials produced from the National Archives, (University of Ibadan), Ibadan.
Beeley, J.H., (C.S.O., 26/29667, Vol. 1.), Intelligence Report on Akoko Districts, Owo Division, Ondo Province, 1935.
Beeley, J. H., (C.S.O., 26/3/29956), Intelligence Report on Owo and Ifon Districts, Owo Division, Ondo Province, 1935.
Owo Div. 1/1. 428, Vol. 1, Ala Forest Reserve and the Akure/Owo Land Dispute.
Owo Div. 1/1, 428, Vol. 1, Akure-Owo Boundary Dispute.
Owo Div. 1/1 File No. 601, item 16, file 4, vol. 111
Owo Div. 1/1, File No. 679, item 3
Owo Div. IV. 1/1, No. 864, vol. 1 Chieftaincy Disputes: General Matters, 1946-55
Owo Div. Ojomo Amaka of Owo, personal papers, 1949-57
Owo Div. 1/1, NO. 4, Vol. 11, Olowo and Ojomo of Owo: Dispute Between, 1948-49
Owo Div. 1/1, No. 4, Vol. 111, Olowo and Ojomo of Owo: Dispute Between, 1949-50
*Available at Owo:
Inenren, D.A., Private Records and Files
Elerewe Olakunori: Private Records and Files.

Gazette: Western Region of Nigeria Gazette, 2 October, 1953, No. 4, Vol. 2
Assessment report for taxation purposes compiled by J.A. Mackenzie and Purchas, Owo Division, 1928.
F.D. Lugard: Annual Report- Northern Nigeria, 1900-1911
Northern Nigeria Gazette, 1901-1909.

Ministry of Information, Western Region of Nigeria, population Census, 1963.

'Ondo Prof' and 'Owo Div' Files. The 'Ondo Prof' and 'Owo Div' Files highlight the activities of British Colonial Officials in the establishment of Owo Native Administration. These files also deal with tax assessment and re-assessment, commercial activities of European firms, letters between traditional rulers, chiefs, important persons, missionaries and the officials of the colonial administration.

'CSO' Files.

The 'CSO' files contain administrative reports as well as Intelligence reports compiled by the administrative officials in the 1930s. These intelligence reports were designed primarily to trace the traditional structure of society predating the activities of the colonial rulers as a guide to their re-organization policies

'Ben Prof' Files. The Benin Provincial files which are found relevant to the present study deal with letters exchanged between officials of Benin Province and Ilorin province as regards the handing over of Kukuruku District formerly in Kabba or Ilorin Province to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Benin Province. These files also contain information on the arrangement for merging the Ifon District with the newly created Owo Native Administration in 1919.
Western Province File (Intelligence Report), No. 11734/16, 1902.
Gazette No. 9/1903 dated 23/03/1903, p. 166.
Western Province Confidential File 10159/14, 1903.
Western Province Confidential File 10159, paragraph 3 of page 14, 1911.
Western Province Confidential files 10159 para 17 of p. 14, 1911.
Minute No. 27 in paragraph 1 of western Province Confidential File 10159
Papers found either at the library of the University of Ibadan, Ibadan or Oluwasanmi library of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.
Western Provincial Confidential File 5635/309- 1932.

Mission Papers

These papers can be grouped into two classes: the first class consists mainly of reports and journal entries written for the Missionary Headquarters in London. The second group consists of letters exchanged between the Missionaries in Owo District and the Secretary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) stationed at Oshogbo.
Journals and Magazines of the CMS: Available at the Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, and Ile-Ife, Nigeria.
Gane, H.F.,
'The Story of Owo,' West Equatorial Africa Diocesan Magazine (WEADM), Vol. X1V, No. 178, April 1909
'News from the Front', WEADM, Vol. XV11, 228, June 1913
'News from the Front', WEADM, Vol. X1X, No. 233, Nov 1913.
Gane, Mrs.
'How a Mission House was built at Owo', WEADM, Vol. X1V, No. 180, June 1909.
Harding, T.,
--'Comment on the regions between the Niger and Yoruba Missions,' Niger and Yoruba Notes, Vol. V11, No. 75, September 1900.
Hedger, T.,
--'Report of the Owo and Ora Districts,' Jan. 1921, WEADM, Vol. XXV1, No. 32, March 1921.
Johnson, James,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

--'The Southern Nigeria British Protectorate,' WEADM, Vol. X1, No. 132, June 1905
--'Islam in Owo,' WEADM, Vol. X1, No. 132, June 1905
McIntyre, J.L.,
--'The Advance of Islam in West Africa,' WEADM, Vol. X1V, No. 173, Nov. 1908.
Mackay, J.,
-- 'Mohammedanism in West Africa,' WEADM, Vol. XV, No. 185 Nov. 1909.
Packenham, E.T.,
--'News from Owo,' WEADM, Vol. XXV1, No. 328, Oct. 1921
The CMS 'Y' Series
Files in these series contain official correspondence between the secretary, CMS, Yoruba Mission and the Mission leaders in Owo and Akoko Districts and between Rev Canon C.W. Jebb, Superintendent of Owo District Mission and Rev L. A. Lennon who was at one time Assistant Superintendent of Owo District Mission. The files also contain reports written by the Mission leaders showing the progress so far achieved in the mission work. These are in files: CMS 'Y' 2/2/7- Papers on Akoko and Kabba Districts, 1903-1924. (We also have copies of the photographs of these gentlemen and their spouses)
CMS 'Y' 2/2/18- reports on Akure, Owo and Igbara-Oke churches, 1924-1929
CMS 'Y' 2/2/19- Papers on Akoko and Kabba Districts, 1924-1933
CMS 'Y' 2/2/20- reports and correspondence on Akoko/ Kabba Districts, 1924-32
CMS 'Y' 2/2/22- Papers on Idoani church, 1922
Owo Divisional Archives, Owo
The CO. 444 series contains reports of the campaigns of the Niger Coast Protectorate (NCP) in Benin City and the Benin Kingdom from 1897 to 1899.
Records of the Yoruba Historical Research Scheme, (YHRS). Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife Oluwasanmi Library, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Secondary Sources

Early European published works: Published

Barbot, J., A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea, London, 1732.
Bosman, W. A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, London, 1705.
Dapper, O. Naukeurige Beschrijvinge van Africa gewesten, Amsterdam, 1668.
Ellis, A.B., The Yoruba Speaking peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa, London, 1894.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Jones, Adam, West Africa in the mid-Seventeenth Century, East Lansing, 1994.

Ogilby, John, Africa, London, 1670.

Pacheco, P. Duarte, Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis, edited by A.E. de Silva Dias, Lisbon, 1905.

Snelgrave, William, A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea, London, 1734.

Windham, Thomas, 'The Voyage of M. Thomas Windham to Guinea and the Kingdom of Benin in Richard Eden: The Decades of the New World,' London, 1555, reported in Richard Haklyut, Principal Navigations of the English Nation, London, 1589, 11, ii, 12, mod. Edn. Glasgow, 1906.

Local Histories

Ademakinwa, J.A. Ife, Cradle of the Yoruba, Lagos, 1958.

Akindoju, S.A. and D.O. Olagundoye, History of Idanre, Ibadan, 1962.

Asabia, D.O. and Adegbesan, J.O., Idoani Past and Present, Ibadan, 1979.

Ashara, M. B., The History of Owo, Owo, 1952.

Egharevba, J. U., A Short History of Benin, Ibadan, 1960.

George, J. O., Historical Notes on the Yoruba country and its Tribes, Lagos, 1895.

Johnson, S., The History of the Yorubas, Lagos: C.M.S., 1921.

Kenyo, E. A., Yoruba National Rulers and their origin, Ibadan, 1897.

Leigh, J. A., History of Ondo, Ondo, 1917.

Losi, J. B., The History of Lagos, Lagos, 1914.

Oguntuyi, Monsignor A.O., A Short history of Ado-Ekiti, Akure, 1957.

Other works

Abimbola, Wande,
Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa, Apa Kini, Glasgow, 1958.
Ijinle Ohun Enu Ifa, Apa Keji, Glasgow, 1969.
(ed.), Yoruba Oral Tradition, Ile-Ife, 1975.
Ifa: An Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus, Ibadan, 1971.
--'The place of African Traditional Religion in Contemporary Africa: the Yoruba Example,' in Jacob K. Olupona, (ed.) African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society, New York, 1991: 51-58.

Abiodun, R.,
-- 'A Reconsideration of the Function of Ako, Second Burial Effigy in Owo,' Africa, 46, 1, 1976: 4-20.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

-- 'The Kingdom of Owo,' in Wardwell, A., Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought, New York, 1989: 91-113.
--'"Ase": verbalizing and visualizing creative power through art,' JRA, vol. 24, 1994: 309-322.

Abodunrin, Femi,
--'Blackness, culture, ideology and discourse: a comparative study,' Bayreuth, Bayreuth African Studies Breitinger, 1996.

Aboyade, B. Olabimpe,
-- Yoruba Culture and Civilization: an introductory bibliography, 1845-1976, Ibadan, 1991

Abraham, R.C.,
-- Dictionary of Modern Yoruba, London, 1958

Adebayo, A.G.,
--'Pre-colonial Institutional frameworks for money lending and loan repayment among the Yoruba,' Paideuma, Frobenius Institute, Bd. 38, 1992: 163-176.

Adediran, Biodun,
--'Idaisa: the making of a frontier Yoruba state,' CEA, 93, XX1V-1, 1984: 71-85.
--'The Structure of Administration of Precolonial Idaisa,' Anthropos, 79, 1984: 55-63.
--'In Search of Identity? The Eastern Yoruba and the Oduduwa Traditions,' Odu, 36, 1989: 114-136.
--'Pleasant imperialism: Conjectures on Benin hegemony in eastern Yorubaland,' African Notes, vol. 15, 1991: 83-95.
---The Frontier States of Western Yorubaland, c1600-1889: State Formation and Political Growth in an Ethnic Frontier Zone, Ibadan, 1994.
--'The State, Ecology and Domestic Economy of Oyo,' Frankfurter Afrikanistiche Blatter, 1995.
--'Yorubaland up to the emergence of the states,' in Deji Ogunremi and Biodun Adediran, (eds.) Culture and Society in Yorubaland, Ibadan, 1998.

Adekunle, Julius O.,
--'Borgu and Economic Transformation, 1700-1900: the Wangara factor,' AEH, no.22, 1994: 1-18.

Adeoye, A. O.,
--'Understanding the Crisis in Nigerian Historiography,' HA, X1X, 1992.

Afigbo, A. E.,
--'Traditions of Igbo Origins: A Comment,' HA, X, 1983.
--The Poverty of African Historiography, Lagos, 1977.
-- 'Colonial Historiography,' in Falola, Toyin: African Historiography, 1993
--Ropes of Sand, Nsukka, 1981.
Afolabi, A.B.
-- and T. Ebijuwa, 'The Status of Women in Traditional Yoruba Society: Autonomy, Influence and Power,' Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere, no. 49, 1997: 21-30

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Afolayan, Funso,
--'Civil Society, Popular Culture and the Crisis of Democratic Transition in Nigeria,' in Jonathan Hyslop, (ed.), *African* Democracy in the Era of Globalization, Witwatersrand University Press, 1999.
--with John Pemberton III, Yoruba Sacred Kingship: A Power like That of the Gods, Smithsonian Institute Press, Washington and London, 1996.
--'War and Change in Nineteenth Century Igbomina,' in Adeagbo Akinjogbin (ed.) *War and Peace in Yorubaland*, 1793-1893, Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1998: 77-90 (chapter six).
--'Warfare and Slavery in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland,' in War and Peace in Yorubaland, 1998: 407-419 (chapter thirty-four).
--'Kingdoms of the Yoruba: Socio-Political Development Before 1800,' in G. Ogunremi and A. Adediran, (eds.) Culture and Society in Yorubaland, Ibadan: Rex Charles Publication, 1998: 14-26.
--'Towards a History of Eastern Yorubaland,' in Toyin Falola, (ed.) Yoruba Historiography, African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1991: 75-87.

Agboola, C.O.O.,
--'History and Historiography in Precolonial Nigerian Societies: the case of the Ekiti,' HA, vol. 26, 1999: 1-10.

Agiri, B.A.,
--'Early Oyo History Reconsidered,' HA, 1975, 1-16.
--'When was Ogbomosho Founded? An analysis of the Traditions of Origin of an Oyo – Yoruba Town with Special Reference to Problems of Chronology and Feedback,' TAJH, 5, 1976.

Ajayi, Bade,
--Ifa Divination: its practice among the Yoruba of Nigeria, Ilorin, 1996.

Ajayi, Jare
--and Ganiyu, Muda, Igbeti: Yoruba History in Perspective, Ibadan, 1996

Ajayi, J.F.A.,
--and Robert S. Smith, Yoruba Warfare in the 19th Century, Cambridge, 1964.
--'Samuel Johnson, Historian of the Yoruba,' Nigeria Magazine, # 81, 1964: 141-6.
-- and Ian Espie, (eds.) A Thousand Years of West African History, Ibadan, 1969.
--and Michael Crowder, (eds.) History of West Africa, 2 vols. London, 1971.
-- and B.A. Ikara) Evolution of Political Culture in Nigeria, Ibadan, 1985.
-- (ed.) Topics in West African History, Longman, 1986.
-- (ed.) Africa in the Nineteenth Century until the 1880s, UNESCO General History of Africa, vol. V1, Heinemann, 1989.
---A Patriot to the core: Samuel Ajayi Crowther, Ibadan, 1992.
---and J.D.Y. Peel (eds.) Peoples and Empires in African History: Essays in memory of Michael Crowder, Longman, 1992.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ajisafe, A. K.,
--Laws and Customs of the Yoruba People, London: Routledge, 1924.

Akinbami, Demola,
--and Olorunnisola, Funmilola, The Royal Eagle of the Yoruba, Ibadan, 1992.

Akinjogbin, I.A.
--'The Prelude to the Yoruba Civil Wars of the Nineteenth Century,' Odu, (2nd series), vol. 1, # 2, 1965: 24-46.
--'A Chronology of Yoruba History, 1789-1840,' Odu, (2nd series), vol. 2, # 2, 1966: 81-111.
--'The Oyo Empire in the Eighteenth Century- A Reassessment,' JHSN, vol. 3, # 3, 1966: 449-60.
- Dahomey and its Neighbors, 1708-1818, Thomas Hutchinson, 1969
--'The Expansion of Oyo and the Rise of Dahomey, 1600-1800,' in J.F. Ade Ajayi and M. Crowder, (eds.), History of West Africa, vol. 1, (2nd edition) London, 1976: 373-412.
--and S.O. Osoba (eds.) Topics on Nigerian Economic and Social History, Ife, 1980.
--The Cradle of a Race: Ife from the Beginning to 1980, Ife: Sunray Pub. 1992
-- (ed.) War and Peace in Yorubaland, 1793-1893, Ibadan, 1998.
-- Milestones and Concepts in Yoruba History and Culture, Lagos, 2002.

Akinola, G.A.,
--'The Origin of the Eweka Dynasty of Benin: A Study in the Use and Abuse of Oral Traditions', JHSN, # 8, 1976: 21-35.

Akintoye, S.A.,
-- 'The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, 1870-1895', JAH, Vol. 10, #-4, 1969.
--'The Northeastern Yoruba Districts and the Benin kingdom,' JHSN, Vol. 4, #4, 1969: 539-53.
--Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840-1893: Ibadan expansion and the rise of the Ekitiparapo, Longman, 1971.
-- 'Ife's Sad Century: the Nineteenth Century in the History of Ife,' Nigeria Magazine, 1980.

Akomolafe, C. O.,
-- 'The District Head System in Akoko, 1914-1935,' Odu, (new series) # 18, 1978: 27-44.
-- 'The Establishment of British Administration and its impact on Owo-Akoko Relations,' JHSN, 10/1, December, 1979: 65-85.

Alagoa, Ebiegberi .J.,
-- 'Dating Oral Tradition,' African Notes, vol. 4, #1, Oct. 1966:

Alao, Akin, -- 'New Owu Settlements in Yorubaland: A Study of Social and Demographic Consequences of War,' in I.A. Akinjogbin, (ed.) War and Peace in Yorubaland, 1793-1893, Ibadan, 1988: 399-406.

Aluko-Olokun, N.,
--Ondo Kingdom: Its History and Culture, Ibadan, 1993.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Amselle, Jean-Loup,
--'Anthropology and Historicity,' in V.Y. Mudimbe and B. Jewsiewicki, (eds.), History making in Africa: History and Theory, Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University, 1993.

Anderson, David A.,
-- The Origin of Life on Earth: An African Creation Myth, Mount Airy, Maryland: Sights Productions, 1991.

Anon (Akeredolu, Justus D. with Mrs. Ann Brooks)
-- 'Igogo Festival', Nigeria Magazine, # 77, 1963.

Apata, Z.O.,
--'British Rule and Protest Movements in Northern Nigeria, 1900-1
TAJH, Vol. 25, 1996: 225-50.
--'Administrative integration and conflict in Nigeria, 1840-1940: the case of northeast Yorubaland,' TAJH, Vol. 24, 1995: 106-122
--'Ilorin-Lagos Relations in the Nineteenth century: a study of British imperial struggle in Yorubaland,' TAJH, Vol. 20, 1991: 145-160.

Appiah, K.A.,
--In My father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture, Oxford, 1992.

Apter, Andrew,
'In Dispraise of the king: Rituals 'Against' Rebellion in South-East Africa,' Man, (n.s.), 18, 1983: 521-534.
--Black Critics and Kings: the Hermeneutics of Power in Yoruba Society,
London, 1992

Areje, Raphael Adekunle,
--Yoruba Proverbs, Ibadan, Nigeria: Daystar Press, 1985

Arens, W.,
--On the Frontier of Change, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979.
--'The Demise of Kings and the Meaning of Kingship,' Anthropos, # 79, 1984: 355-67.

Argyle, W. J.,
--The Fon of Dahomey: A History and Ethnography of the Old Kingdom, Oxford: Clarendon Press, (Oxford Monographs on Social Anthropology), 1966.

Arhin, Kwame,
--'Trade, Accumulation and the State in Asante in the Nineteenth Century,' Africa, 60, 1990: 524-37

Arifalo, S.O.,
--An Analysis and Comparison of the Legends of Origin of Akure, Akure, 1994;
--The Egbe Omo Oduduwa: a study in ethnic and cultural nationalism,
Akure, 2001.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Arjun, Appadurai,
-- 'The Past as a Scarce Resource,' Man, 16, 1981: 201-19.

Asiwaju, A.I.,
--'A Note on the History of Sabe', Lagos Note and Records, # 4. 1973.
--'Political Motivation and Oral Historical Tradition in Africa: the case of Yoruba crowns, 1900-1960,' Africa, 46, 1976: 113-23.
--The *Birth* of Yewaland: studies and documents relating to the change of a Yoruba sub-ethnic name from Egbado to Yewa in Ogun State of Nigeria, Ibadan, 1995.
--Western Yorubaland under European Rule, 1889-1945: A Comparison of British and French Imperialisms, Longman, 1976.

Atanda, J.A.,
--The New Oyo Empire, 1894-1934: Indirect Rule and Change in Western Nigeria, London, 1973.
--An Introduction to Yoruba History, Ibadan, 1980
-'The Historian and the problem of origins of people in Nigerian society,' JHSN, X, 1980.

Atkinson, R.R.,
--'The Traditions of the Early Kings of Buganda: Myth, History and Structural Analysis,' HA, #2, 1975: 17-57.

Awe, Bolanle,
-- 'Praise Poems as Historical Data: the example of the Yoruba oriki,'Africa, 44, 1974: 333-46.

Ayandele, E. A.,
--The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842- 1914: a political and social analysis, Longman, 1967.
--et. al. (and J.D. Omer-Cooper and R.J. Gavin and E.A. Afigbo), The making of Modern Africa, vol. 1: The Nineteenth Century to the partition: the Growth of African Civilization, Humanities, 1968, vol. ii; The late Nineteenth Century to the Present Day, Longman, 1971.
--Nigerian Historical Studies, Frank Cass, 1979.
--The Ijebu of Yorubaland, 1850-1950: politics, economy and society, Ibadan, 1992.

Ayittey, George B.N.,
--Indigenous African Institutions, New York, 1991.

Babatunde, Emmanuel D.,
-- A Critical Study of Bini and Yoruba of Nigeria Value Systems in Change: culture, religion and the self, Lewiston, NY, 1992.

Barber, Karen,
--I Could Speak until Tomorrow: Oriki, Women and the Past in a Yoruba Town, Edinburgh, 1991.
---'Oriki, women and the proliferation of Orisa,' Africa, 60, 3, 2000: 313-337.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

P.F de Moraes Farias and ---, Self-Assertion and Brokerage: early cultural nationalism in West Africa, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Centre for West African Studies, 1990.

Barker, Carol,
--An Oba of Benin, London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1976

Bascom, W.,
--The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria, New York, 1969.
-- Ifa Divination, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971.
--16 Cowries: Yoruba in Africa and the New World, Bloomington Indiana University Press, 1980.

Beachy, R.W.,
--'The East African Ivory Trade in the 19th Century,' JAH, # 8, 1967: 269-90.

Beier, H.U.,
--'Before Oduduwa', Odu, # 3, 1956.
--Yoruba Myths, London, 1980.
--Yoruba Beaded Crowns: Sacred Regalia of the Olokuku of Okuku, Ethnographica, 1982.

Ben-Amos, Paula,
--'Who is the man in the bowler hat? Emblems of Identity in Benin royal art,' Bassler-Archiv, 31, 1983: 161-83.
-- 'Royal art and ideology in 18th century Benin,' Iowa Studies in African Art, 1984.

Bennett, R.E.,
-- Nigerian Studies or the Religious and Political System of the Yoruba, London, 1910.

Bernal, M.
-- Black Athena: the Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, (2 vols.), London, 1987.

Berry, Sara S.,
--Chiefs know their Boundaries: Essays on Property, Power and the Past in Asante, 1896-1996, Heinemann, 2001.

Billington, Ray Allen,
--'The American Frontier,' in Paul Bohannan and Fred Plog, (eds.) Beyond the Frontier, New York : Natural History Press, 1967: 3-24.

Biobaku, S.O.,
--The Egba and Their Neighbors, 1842-1872, Oxford, 1957.
--'The Problem of Traditional History with special Reference to Yoruba Traditions,' JHSN, 1, 1956.
-- (ed.), Sources of Yoruba History, Oxford, 1973.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

-- 'Traditions of Origins of Nigerian People: Yoruba,' Paper presented at a workshop on The Traditions of Origins of Nigerian Peoples, Department of History, University of Ibadan, 1978.

Blackburn, Robin,
-- The Making of New World Slavery: from the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800, London, 1997.

Bloch, Marc,
--Feudal Society, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961

Bohannan, Paul ,
--'The Migration and the expansion of the Tiv,' Africa, 24, 1954:2-16
Bohannan, Paul,
-- and Fred Plog, (eds.), Beyond the Frontier: Social Process and Cultural Change, Garden City, New York : Natural History Press, 1953.

Boston, J. S.,
-- 'The Hunter in Igala Legends of Origin,' Africa, # 34, 1964.
Bouwsma, William,
-- 'From History of Ideas to History of Meaning,' JIH, 12, 1981: 279-291.

Bowen, T.J.,
--Adventures and Missionary Labors in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa from 1849 to 1856, Charleston, 1857, (1968 edn.)

Bradbury, R.E.,
--The Benin Kingdom and the Edo–Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria, London, 1964.
--'Chronological Problems in Benin History', JHSN, # 1, I, 1959.
--'Patrimonialism and Gerontocracy in Benin Political Culture,' in M. Douglas and P.M Kaberry, (eds.), Man in Africa, London, 1969: 17-36.
--'The Historical Uses of Comparative Ethnography, with special reference to Benin and the Yoruba,' in J. Vansina, R. Mauny, and L.V. Thomas, (eds.), The Historian in Tropical Africa, London, 1964.
--Benin Studies, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Bridges, A.F.B.,
-- 'Idanre,' Nigerian Field, V, 4, 1936.

Brown, Paula.
--'Patterns of Authority in West Africa,' Africa, 21, 1951.

Buchanan, K.M. and J.C. Pugh,
--Land and People in Nigeria, London, 1955.

Buckland, Raymond and Binger, Kathleen,
--The Book of African Divination: interpreting the forces of destiny with techniques from the Venda and Yoruba, Rochester, 1992.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Butcher, H.L.M.,
--'Some Aspects of the Otu system of the Isa (Esan) Sub-tribes of the Edo-speaking People of Southern Nigeria,' Africa, 8, 1935: 147-162.

Clark, John D,
--The Prehistory of Africa, London: Thames and Hudson, 1970.

Clarke, J.D.,
-- 'Ilorin Stone Bead Making,' Nigeria Magazine, # 14, 1938.

Clarke, W.H.,
-- (edn.), Atanda, J.A., Travels and Explorations in Yorubaland, 1854-1858, Ibadan, 1972

Chen, Ronald and Elman R. Service, (eds.),
--Origins of the State: The Anthropology of Political Evolution, Philadelaphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978.
Cohen, Abner,
--The Politics of Ethnicity in African Towns, Longman, 1992

Cohen, David William,
--The Historical Traditions of Busoga, Mukama and Kintu, Oxford, 1972.
--Womunafu's Bunafu: A Study of Authority in a 19th century African Community, Princeton, 1977.
-- --'Reconstructing a Conflict in Bunafu: Evidence outside the Narrative Tradition,' in J. C., Miller, (ed.) The African Past Speaks, Folkstone: Dawson-Archon, 1980: 201-20.

Cohen, Ronald and John Middleton,
--'Introduction' in Ronald Cohen and John Middleton, (eds.), From Tribe to Nation in Africa: Studies in Incorporation Processes, Scranton, Pennsylvania: Chandler, 1970:1-34.

Comaroff, John
--and Jean, Ethnography and the Historical Imagination, Boulder: West-View Press, 1992.

Conan, Graham,
--The Archaeology of Benin, Oxford, 1975
--African Civilizations: pre-colonial cities and states in Tropical Africa-an archaeological perspective, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Cox, A.H.,
--'The Growth and Expansion of Buganda,' Uganda Journal, 1950:153-159.

Crowder, Michael,
--and Ikime, Obaro, (eds.) West African Chiefs: Their Changing Roles under Colonial Rule and Independence, London, 1970.
-- The Story of Nigeria, London, 1966.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Crummey, Donald,
--'Society, State and Nationality in the recent historiography of Ethiopia,' JAH, 31, 1990: 103-119.

Curtin, P.D.,
-- (ed.) Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade, Madison, 1967.
--The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census, Madison, 1969.
--et. al., African History, Boston: Little, Brown, 1978.
--Cross-Cultural Trade in World History, Cambridge: England, Cambridge University Press, 1984

Danfulani, Umar Habila Dadem,
-- 'Sixteen figure Divination in Africa: Its regional spread and relationship with Arab-Islamic geomancy,' Africana Marburgensia, vol. XXX, #1, 1997: 24-45.

D'Azevedo, Warren,
--'Some Historical Problems in the Delineation of a Central West Atlantic Region,' Annals, New York Academy of Sciences, # 96, Vol. 2, 1962: 512-538.

Dantzig, Albert and Adam Jones,
--Historical Account of the Golden Coast of Africa, Oxford, 1989.

Dark, P. J. C.,
-- Introduction to Benin Art and Technology, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973.

Darling, P. J.,
--'Notes on the Earthworks of the Benin Empire,' WAJA, 6, 1976.
--'Archaeology and History in Southern Nigeria: the Ancient Linear Earthworks of Benin and Ishan,' Cambridge Monographs in African Archaeology, 11, 1984.

Davidson, B.,
--The African Genius, Boston: Little, Brown, 1969.
--Black Mother: Africa, The Years of Trial, (2nd edn.), London, 1970.
--'Slaves or Captives? Some Notes on fantasy and facts,' in Nathan Huggins, et. al. (eds.), Issues in the Afro-American Experience, New York, 1971.
--and F.K Buah and the Advice of J.F. Ade Ajayi, A History of West Africa, 1000-1800, (New Rev. ed.) London: Longman, 1977.
--The African Slave Trade, (Rev. ed.), Boston: Little, Brown, 1980.
--Africa in History, Rev. ed. New York: Collier, 1991.

DeCorse, Christopher R.,
-- (ed.) West Africa During the Atlantic Slave Trade: Archaeological Perspectives, New Approaches to Anthropological Archaeology, Leicester, 2001.

Dike, Kenneth Onwuka,
--and Ekejiuba, Felicia, The Aro of Southeastern Nigeria, 1650-1980: a study of socio-economic formation and transformation in Nigeria, Ibadan, 1990.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Dixon, P. J.,
-- 'Uneasy lies the head: politics, economics and the continuity of belief among Yoruba of Nigeria,' CSSH, Vol. 33, no.1, 1991: 56-85.

Doortmont, Michel R.,
-- 'The Invention of the Yorubas: Regional and Pan-African Nationalism versus Ethnic Provincialism,' in PF de Moraes Farias and Karen Barber, (eds.) Self-Assertion and Brokerage: early cultural nationalism in West Africa, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Centre for West African Studies, 1990: 101-108.

Dower, John,
--War Without Mercy: race and power in the Pacific war, New York: Pantheon Books, 1986.

Drewal, Henry, et. al.
--Yoruba: nine Centuries of African art and Thought, New York: Center for African Art in Association with H.N. Abrams, 1989.

Eades, J.S.,
-- The Yoruba Today, Oxford, 1980.

Eccles, W. J.,
-- The Canadian Frontier: 1534-1760, Alberquerque: University of New Mexico Press, (rev. ed.), 1983.

Editor,
-- 'Native Crowns,' JRAS, 1902-3.

Egharevba, J. U.,
--A Short History of Benin, 4th ed. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1960

Ekeh, Peter P.
--'Social Anthropology and Two Contrasting uses of Tribalism in Africa,' CSSH, 32, 4, 1990: 660-700.
-- 'Contesting the History of Benin Kingdom,' Research in African Literatures, Vol. 33, # 3, 2000: 147-170.

Eliphinstone, K, V.,
-- Gazetteer of Ilorin Province, London, 1921.

Eluyemi, O.,
--'Selecting an Ooni of Ife,' Nigeria Magazine, 53, 4, 1985.

Epega, Afolabi A.,
--and Phillip John Neimark, The Sacred Ifa oracle, San Francisco, 1995.

Equiano, Oladuah,
--adapted by Anne Cameron, The Kidnapped Prince: The Life of Oladuah Equiano, New York: Knopf, 1995.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Eyo, Ekpo,
--'Treasures from Nigeria,' Expedition, # 6, 1972.

Ezra, Kate,
--Royal Art of Benin: the Perls Collection, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992.

Fadipe, N.A.
-- (eds.), Okediji, F.O. and O.O. Okediji, The Sociology of the Yoruba, Ibadan, 1970.

Fagan, Brian and Roland Oliver,
--Africa in the Iron Age: c500BC-c1400AD, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Fage, J.D.,
--'Some Notes on a Scheme for the Investigation of Oral Tradition in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast,' JHSN, 1, I, 1956: 15-19
--'Some Remarks on Beads and Trade in Lower Guinea in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,' JAH, #3, 1962: 343-7.
--'States of the Guinea Forest,' in R. Oliver (ed.), The Dawn of African History, (2nd edition) London, 1968: 68-74.
--A History of West Africa: An Introductory Survey, Cambridge, 1969.
--'Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Context of West African History,' JAH, # 10, 1969: 393-404.

Fagg, W.,
--Afro/ Portuguese Ivories, London: Batchworth Press, 1959.
--and Eliot Elisofon, The Sculpture of Africa, Praeger, 1958, reprinted, Hacker, 1978.
--Nigerian Images: The Splendor of African Sculpture, Praeger, 1963.
--and F. Willett, 'Notes on Ancient Ile-Ife,' Nigeria Magazine, #100, 1960.
--Divine Kingship in Africa, London: the Trustees of the British Museum, 1978.
--Yoruba Beadwork, Rizzoli, 1980; African Majesty, Art gallery of Ontario, 1982.
--and J. Pemberton, Yoruba: Sculpture of West Africa, Knopf, 1982.

Fajana, A.,
-- 'Age-Groups in Yoruba Traditional Society,' Nigeria Magazine, No. 98, September/November, 1968.

Fallers, L.A.,
-- 'Despotism, Status Culture and Social Mobility in an African Kingdom,' CSSH, # 2, 1959: 4-32.

Falola, Toyin,
--Politics and Economy in Ibadan, 1893-1945, Ife, 1980.
--A History of West Africa, Lagos, 1987.
--'The Yoruba caravan system of the nineteenth century,' IJAHS, vol. 24, no. 1, 1991: 216-226.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

-- (ed.), African Historiography, Longman, 1993.
--'"Alternative History": the world of Yoruba chroniclers,' Passages, V1, 1993.
--Yoruba Gurus: Indigenous Production of Knowledge in Africa, Trenton, 1999.
--Culture and Customs of Nigeria, Westport, 2001.
-- (ed.) Yoruba Warlords of the Nineteenth Century, Trenton, 2001.

Farias, P.F. de Moraes,
-- 'History and Consolation,' HA, vol. 19, 1992: 263-97.
--'Praise Splits the Subject of Speech: Constructions of Kingship in the Manden and Borgu,' in G. Furniss and L. Gunner (eds.) Power, Marginality and Oral Literature, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995: 225-43.
-- 'The Oral Traditionalist as Critic and Intellectual Producer: an example from contemporary Mali,' in Toyin Falola, African Historiography, 1992: 14-38.
-- '"Yoruba Origins" Revisited by Muslims,' in P.F. de Moraes Farias and K. Barber, (eds.) Self-Assertion and Brokerage, 1993: 109-147.

Feeley-Harnik, G.,
-- 'Issues in Divine Kingship,' Annual Review of Anthropology, # 34, 1985: 273-313.

Flint, J.E.,
--Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria, Oxford, 1960.

Forde, Daryl,
--The Yoruba Speaking Peoples of Southwestern Nigeria, (Ethnographic Survey of Africa: Western Africa), Part 1V, London, 1951.

Forde, D.,
--and Phyllis M. Kaberry, (eds.), West African Kingdoms in the Nineteenth Century, London, 1971.

Frank, Barbara E.,
and David C. Conrad, (eds.), Status and Identity in West Africa: Nyamakalaw of Mande, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995.

Frankfort, H.,
-- Kingship and the Gods, Chicago, 1948.

Freyer, Bryna,
---Royal Benin Art, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987.

Gbadamosi, T.G.O.
--and J.F.Ade Ade Ajayi, 'Islam and Christianity in Nigeria,' in Obaro Ikime, (ed.) Groundwork of Nigerian History, Ibadan: Heinemann Books, 1999 reprint.

Galembo, Phyllis,
--Divine Inspiration: from Benin to Bahia, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Gerhard Dietrich,
-- 'The Frontier in Comparative View,' CSSH, 1, 1959: 205-229

Gibson, A.E. M.
--Slavery in West Africa, JAS, 111, 1903.

Gilbert, Felix,
--'Intellectual History: Its Aims and Methods,' in Felix Gilbert and Stephen Graubard, (eds.) Historical Studies Today, New York, 1972: 141-158.

Girshick, Paula Ben-Amos
--and John Thornton, 'Civil War in the Benin kingdom, 1689-1721: Continuity or Change?' JAH, # 42, 2001: 353-376.

Goody, Jack,
--Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa, London: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Greenberg, Joseph, H.,
-- 'The Languages of Africa, Part 11,' IJAL, Vol. 29, #.1, 1963
--The Languages of Africa, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 3rd edition, 1970

Hartwig, G.W.,
---'The Victoria Nyanza Trade Route in the 19th Century,' JAH, # 11, 1970: 535-52.

Haas, Jonathan,
-- (ed.), From Leaders to Rulers: Fundamental Issues in Archaeology, New York, 2000.

Haligren. Roland,
--"The vital force 'Ase' in the traditional and neo-traditional culture of the Yoruba people," Lund: Department of History of Religions, University of Lund, 1995

Harms, Robert,
--- The Diligent: a voyage through the worlds of the Slave Trade, New York: Basic Books, c2002.

Hayden, Ilse,
---Symbol and Privilege: the Ritual Context of British Royalty, Tucson, 1987

Helms, Mary and Franklin O. Loveland, (eds.),
--Frontier Adaptations in Lower Central America, Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976.

Hennessy, Alistair,
-- The Frontier in Latin American History, London: Edward Arnold, 1978.

Henige, D.P.,
--The Chronology of Oral Tradition: Quest for a Chimera, Oxford, 1974.
-- 'The disease of writing', in J.C. Miller (ed.) The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History, London, 1980.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

--'Truths Yet Unborn? Oral Tradition as a Casualty of Culture Contact,' JAH, 23, 1982: 395-412.
-- 'Omphalosskepsis and Infantilizing,' JAH, 36, 1995: 311-18.

Hocart, A.M.,
-- Kingship, London, 1927.

Hodgkin, Thomas,
-- Nigerian Perspectives: An Historical Anthology, Oxford, 1975.

Home, Robert,
--City of Blood Revisited: A New Look at the Benin Expedition of 1897, London: Rex Collins, 1982.

Hooke, S.H.,
-- (ed.), Myth, Ritual and Kingship, Oxford, 1958.

Hopkins, Anthony,
--An Economic History of West Africa, London, 1973.
---'A Report on the Yoruba, 1910', JHSN, # V, No. 1, 1960.

Horton, Robin,
--'Stateless Societies in the History of West Africa,' in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, (eds.), History of West Africa, New York: Columbia University Press 1972:78-119
--'Ancient Ife: A Reassessment,' JHSN, 9, 4, 1979

Hull, Richard W.,
--African Cities and Towns Before the European Conquest, New York: Norton, 1976.

Ibazebo, Isineme,
--Explorations into Africa, New York: New Discovery Books, McMillan, 1994

Idowu, E. B.,
--Olodumare: - God in Yoruba Belief, New York, 2000 (reprint).

Igbafe, Phillip Aigbona,
--Benin Under British Administration: The Impact of Colonial Rule on a West African Kingdom, 1897-1938, Atlantic Highlands, NJ, Humanities Press, 1979.

Ikime, Obaro,
-- (ed.) Groundwork of Nigerian History, Ibadan, 1999 (reprint).

Imoagene, Oshomha,
--The Yoruba of South –Western Nigeria, Ibadan, 1990
--Know Your Country Series: Handbooks of Nigeria's Major Culture Areas, Ibadan, Nigeria: New –Era Publishers, 1990.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Inden, R.,
--Imagining India, Oxford, 1992.

Isaac, E.,
--'Genesis, Judaism and the "Sons of Ham"' in J.R. Willis, (ed.), Slave and Slavery in Muslim Africa, (2 vols.) London, 1985.

Isaacman, Allen.,
--'The Origin, Formation and early History of the Chikunda of South Central Africa,' JAH, # 13, 1972: 443-61.
--and Isaacman, Barbara, 'The Prazeros as Transfrontiersmen: A Study in Social and Cultural Change,' IJAHS, 8, #1, 1975.

Isichei, Elizabeth,
--'Historical Change in an Ibo Polity: Asaba to 1885,' JAH, 10, 1969.
--A History of Nigeria, Longman, 1980.
-- 'Myth, Gender and Society in Pre-colonial Asaba,' Africa, 61, 4, 1991: 513-529.

Jewsiewicki, B.,
-- and D. Newbury, (eds.), African Historiographies: what History for which Africa? Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1986.

Johnston, H.A.S.,
--The Fulani Empire of Sokoto, London, 1967.

Jones, Adam,
---German Sources for West African History, 1592-1669, Wiesbaden, 1983.

July, R. W.,
--The Origins of Modern African Thought, New York, 1967.

Kalilu, R.O. Rom,
--'Conceptual kings and the crown: ecology and royalty in Yoruba gourd carving,' Africa, vol. 20, no. 1, 1997: 127-40.

Kalous, Milan,
--'The Economic and Political Structure of the Benin kingdom,' AfriKa und Ubersee, 53, 1969.

Kapteijns, L.,
-- African Historiography Written by Africans, 1955-1973: the Nigerian case, Leiden, 1977.

Karugire, S. R.,
--- A History of the kingdom of Nkore in Western Uganda to 1896, Oxford, 1971.

Kaser, R.T.,
--African Oracles in 10 Minutes, New York, 1996.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Kea, Ray A.,
--'Firearms on the Gold and Slave Coasts from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth centuries, JAH, 12, 1971.

Kennedy, Paul,
--The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers, New York, 1987.

Kesteloot, L.
--'Myth, Epic and African History,' in V. Y. Mudimbe, Surreptitious Speech: Presence Africaine and the Politics of Otherness, 1947-1987, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992

Kiewiet, C. W.,
--A History of South Africa, London: Oxford University Press, 1957

Ki-Zerbo, J.,
--- (ed.), General History of Africa: 1. Methodology and African Pre-History, UNESCO International Scientific Committee for the Drafting of a General History of Africa, UNESCO, 1980.

Kludze, A. Kodzo Paaku,
--Chieftaincy in Ghana, New York, 2000.

Kopytoff, Igor,
--' Speculations About the Internal African Frontier,' in African studies Association Papers, Watham, Massachusetts, :African Studies Association, 1977.
-- (ed.) ' Introduction, ' The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990

Krapf-Askaris, Eva,
-- Yoruba Towns and Cities, Oxford: Clarenden Press, 1969.

Krieger, Leonard,
--'The Autonomy of Intellectual History,' in Geog Iggers and Harold Parker, (eds.) International Handbook of Historical Studies: Contemporary Research and Theory, Westport, 1979: 109-125.

Lamar, Howard
--and Thompson, Leonard, (eds.), The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981

Lancaster, C. S.,
--'The economics of Social Organization in an Ethnic Border Zone: The Goba, (Northern Shona) of the Zamabezi Valley, Ethnology, 10, 1971:445-465

Law, Robin,
-- 'Early Yoruba Historiography,' HA, 3, 1971.
-- 'The Heritage of Oduduwa: Traditional History and Political Propaganda among the Yoruba,' JAH, X1V, 2, 1973.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

-- 'The Horse in Yorubaland,' African Notes, 1973.
--'Traditional History,' in S. O., Biobaku, (ed.) Sources of Yoruba History, Oxford, 1975.
-- 'How Truly Traditional is our Traditional History? The case of Samuel Johnson and the Recording of Yoruba oral tradition,' HA, 1984: 195-221.
--'"My head belongs to the king": on the political and religious significance of decapitation in pre-colonial Dahomey,' JAH, 30, 1989: 399-415.
--The Oyo Empire, c1600-c1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade, Oxford, 1991.
--'"Constructing" a real national history: a comparison of Edward Blyden and Samuel Johnson,' in P.F. de Farias Moraes and K. Barber, (eds.), Self Assertion and Brokerage: early cultural nationalism in West Africa, Birmingham, 1990.
--'How truly traditional is our traditional history? The case of Samuel Johnson and the recording of Yoruba oral Tradition,' in Toyin Falola (ed.), Pioneer, 1993.
-- (ed.) From Slave Trade to Legitimate Commerce: The Commercial transition in nineteenth century West Africa, Cambridge, 1995.
--- 'Ethnicity and the Slave Trade: "Lucumi" and "Nago" as ethno-nyms in West Africa,' HA, Vol. 24, 1997: 205-219.

Lawson, Thomas,
--Religions of Africa, New York: Harper & Row, 1984.

Lewis, H. S.,
--'The Origins of African Kingdoms,' CEA, # V1, No. 3, 1966.

Lloyd, P.C.,
--'The Yoruba Lineage,' Africa, 25, 1955: 235-51
-- 'Sacred Kingship and Government among the Yoruba,' Africa, 30 1960: 221-37.
--'Installing the Awujale,' Ibadan, 12, 1962.
--Yoruba Land Law, London, 1962.
-- 'The Political Structure of African Kingdoms: An Exploratory Model,' in M. Gluckman and F. Eggan, (eds.) Political Systems and the Distribution of Power, London, 1965
-- 'The Development of African kingdoms in the 19th century,' a review article, JAH, 9, 1968: 319-29
--'The Political Development of Yoruba Kingdoms in the 18th and 19th centuries,' Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Occasional Paper, # 31, London, 1971.
--'The Yoruba: An Urban People?' in A. Southall, (ed.), Urban Anthropology, Oxford, 1973
--'Ijebu,' in Rene Lemarchand, (ed.), African Kingdoms in Perspective: Political Change and Modernization in Monarchical Settings, London, 1977

Lovejoy, P. E.,
-- 'The Ibadan School of Historiography,' in Falola, Toyin, African Historiography, Longman, 1973.

Lucas, Olumide,
-- The Religion of the Yorubas, Lagos, 1948.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Mabogunje, Akin L.,
--Yoruba Towns, Ibadan, 1962
-- (ed.) The City of Ibadan, Cambridge, 1967.
-- (ed.) Pathfinder Atlas for Nigeria, Collins, 1967.
-- Urbanization in Nigeria, Africana Press, 1969.
--and J.D. Omer-Cooper, Owu in Yoruba History, Ibadan, 1971.

MacMillan, W. M.,
--Bantu, Boer and Briton: The Making of the South African Native Problem, London, 1963

Magubane, B. M.
--The ties that bind: African-American Consciousness of Africa, Trenton, NJ, 1987.

Mair, Lucy,
--African Kingdoms, Oxfrod Clarendon Press, 1977

Manning, Patrick,
--Slavery and African Life, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Mason, M.
--'Population Density and Slave raiding in the Case of the Middle Belt of Nigeria,' JAH, # X, No. 4, 1969.
-- 'The Jihad in the South: an outline of the 19th Century Nupe Hegemony in Northeastern Yorubaland and Afenmai,' JHSN, # V, No. 2, 1970.

May, D.J.,
-- 'Journey in the Yoruba and Nupe countries in 1859,' JRGS, # XXX, 1860.

McCaskie, T. C.,
--'Komfo Anokye of Asante: Meaning, History and Philosophy in an African Society,' JAH, 27, 1986: 315-339.
-- 'R. S. Rattray and the Construction of Asante History: An Appraisal,' HA, vol. 10, 1986: 187-206.
-- 'Empire State: Asante and the Historians,' JAH, Vol. 33, 1992.
-- 'Inventing Asante,' in P.F de Moraes Farias and Karen Barber, (eds.) Self-Assertion and Brokerage: early cultural nationalism in West Africa, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Centre for West African Studies, 1990.

McEvedy, Colin,
--The Penguin Atlas of African History, New York: Penguin, 1980.

McIntosh, Susan Keech,
-- (ed.), Beyond Chiefdoms: Pathways to Complexity in Africa, Cambridge, 1999.

McIntyre, D. W.,
--The Imperial Frontier in the Tropics,: 1865-75, New York, 1976.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Miller, J.C.,
-- (ed.), The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History, Dawson & Archon, 1980.

Mitchell, Robert D.,
--Commercialization and Frontier: Perspectives on the early Shenandoah Valley, Charlottsville: University Press of Virginia, 1977.

Mudimbe, V. Y.,
--The Invention of Africa, London, 1988;
--The Surreptitious Speech: Presence Africaine and the Politics of Otherness, 1947-1987, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Murdock, George P.,
--Africa: Its Peoples and Their Culture History, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959

Murray, Jocelyn,
-- (ed.), Cultural Atlas of Africa, New York: Facts on File, 1981.

Na'allah, Abdul-Rasheed,
--'The Origin of Egungun: a critical literary appraisal,' African Study Monographs, Vol. 17, no.2, 1996: 59-68.

Neale, C.,
--Writing 'independent' History, Westport and London, 1985.

Nadel, F.,
-- 'Nupe State and Community', Africa, Vol. 111, No. 3, July 1935.

Neimark, Phillip John,
-- The Way of the Orisa, San Francisco: Harper/ San Francisco, 1999.

Neumark, S. D.,
--Economic Influences on the South African Frontier, Standford: Standford University Press, 1957

Newbury, C.W.,
--The Western Slave Coast and its Rulers: European Trade and Administration among the Yoruba and Adja Speaking people of Southwestern Nigeria and Southern Dahomey, London, 1961.

Newbury, D. S.,
--'Rwandan Chronology in Regional Perspective,' CEA, 4, 15, 1993: 163-208.

Niehaus, Isak A.
--'Witch–hunting and Political Legitimacy: Continuity and change in Green valley Lebowa, 1930-91,' Africa, 63, 1993: 498-530.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Northrop, David,
-- Trade Without Rulers: Pre-colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria, Oxford, 1978.

Obayemi, Ade,
--'The Yoruba and the Edo Speaking Peoples and their Neighbors Before 1600,' in J.F.Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, (eds.), History of West Africa (2nd ed.) London, 1976: 136- 201.
--'The Sokoto Jihad and the 'O-kun Yoruba: A Review,' JHSN, #9, vol.2, 1978: 61-87.

Ofonagoro, Walter I.
--'Re-appraisals in History: the West African context' in O.E. Uya and E.O. Erim, (eds.), Perspectives and Methods of Studying African History, Enugu, 1984.

Ogundiran, Akinwunmi O.,
--'Filling a gap in the Ife-Benin interaction field (Thirteenth-Sixteenth Centuries, AD): Excavations in Iloyi Settlement, Ijesaland,' African Archaeological Review, Vol. 19, no.1, 2002: 27-60.
--'Chronology, Material Culture, and Pathways to the Cultural History of Yoruba –Edo Region, 500B. C. –A.D. 1800,' in Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written and Unearthed, (ed.) Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings, University of Rochester Press, 2003:33-79

Ogunkoya, I,
-- 'The Early History of Ijebu,' JHSN, # 1, No. 1, 1965.

Ogunleye
-- Judicial Commission of Inquiry: Record of Daily Proceedings, Second Sitting, Ondo State Government of Nigeria, Akure, 16, August 1979.

Ogunmola, M.O.,
-- A New Perspective on Oyo Empire History: 1530-1944, Ibadan, 1997.

Ogunshakin, Patrick,
--Olumo: an illustrated account of the 'Olumo' rock sacred in Abeokuta's history as the place where the first settlers found protection 'under stone,' Lagos, 1992.

Oguntuyi, Monsignor A.O.,
--A Short History of Ado-Ekiti, Akure, 1957.
--Aduloju, Dodondawa: Oko-Ekiti, Oko Akoko, n.d. Ado-Ekiti

Ojo, G.J.A.,
--Yoruba Culture, London, 1966.
--Yoruba Palaces, London, 1966.

Ohadike, Don C.,
--Anioma: A Social History of the Western Ibo People, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ojuade, J.,
--'The issue of "Oduduwa" in Yoruba genesis: myths and realities,' TAJH, Vol.21, 1992.

Okpewho, Isidore,
--Once Upon a kingdom: myth, hegemony and identity, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1998.
-- 'African Mythology and Africa's Political Impasse,' Research in African Literatures, 29, 1, 1998.

Olaoba, O.B.,
-- 'Palaces as Court of Arbitration in Traditional Yoruba Societies,' WAJA, Vol. 27, #2, pp. 81-99, 1997.

Oliver, R.,
--The Middle Age of African History, Oxford University Press, 1967.
--The Dawn of African History, London: Oxford University Press, 1968.
--and Brian M. Fagan, Africa in the Iron Age, Cambridge: CUP, 1975.
-- and J. D. Fage, A Short History of Africa: Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962.

Olomola, Ishola,
--'Ife Before Oduduwa,' I.A. Akinjogbin, The Cradle of a Race: Ife from the Beginning to 1980, Ile-Ife, 1992.

Olugbadehan, J. O.,
--'Isolationism As A Plank In American Foreign Policy Formulation And Its Consequences On The World in the Inter-War Years, 1918-1939,' a paper presented at a seminar in the Department of History, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1980.
--'The Significance of the 1886 Treaty: British intervention and the imposition of colonial rule in Yorubaland, 1877-1893,' a paper presented at the Centenary Celebration of the 1886 Treaty of the Ekitiparapo/Kiriji (Yoruba) Wars at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, August 1986.
-'The Constitutional Troubles of Owo in the 19th century,' a paper presented at the Centenary Celebration of the 1886 Treaty of the Ekitiparapo/Kiriji (Yoruba) Wars at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, August 1986.
--Archaeological Evidence As A Source For Historical Reconstruction: the case of Owo,' a paper presented at a seminar at the Department of History, Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti, 1987.
--'Owo–Benin Relations in the Pre-colonial Era: A Reassessment,' Africana Marburgensia, XX1, 2, 1988: 127-139.
--'Commodities and Commerce in Early Colonial Nigeria: Rubber Production and Trade in Yorubaland, 1890s-1910s,' a paper presented at a seminar in the Department of History, Columbia University, New York, 1991.
'The Igogo Festival in Owo, Southwestern Nigeria,' a paper read at the Peer Day event on Festival Culture, Denver, Colorado on February 25, 2006.
--'The Benin Factor in the History of Owo,' submitted for publication in a book in honor and memory of Ade Obayemi, Professor of History and Archaeology, University of Ilorin, Nigeria, 2004.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

--'From Protégé to Pariah: the vicissitudes of Olagbegi I, an African ruler, under colonial rule, 1902-1936.' Forthcoming.

Olukoju, Ayodeji,
--'Siege of Oka, 1878-1884: A Study in the resistance to Nupe Militarism in Northeast Yorubaland,' in T. Falola, ed., Warfare, Diplomacy and Society in Nigeria, Madison, 1992.
-- 'Oral Tradition and The Political History of Oka-Akoko,' HA, Vol. 20, 1993: 249-262.
-- et. al., (Olukoju, Ayodeji, Apata, Z. O., and Akinwunmi, Olayemi), Northeast Yorubaland: Studies in the History and Culture of a Frontier Zone, Rex Charles Publications with Connell Publications, 1999

Olupona, Jacob K.,
-- Kingship, Religion and Rituals in a Nigerian Community: a phenomenological study of Ondo Yoruba festivals, Stockolm, 1991.

Olusanya, G.O.,
--Studies in Yoruba History and Culture: Essays in Honor of Professor S.O. Biobaku, (Ibadan, 1983)
Omoyajowo, Joseph Akinyele,
--'The role of women in African traditional religion among the Yoruba,' in Jacob K. Olupona, (ed.), African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society, New York, 1991: 73-80.

Oronsanye, DN.,
--The History of the Ancient Benin Kingdom and Empire, Benin City: Jeromelaiho, 1995.

Otite, Onigu,
-- (ed.) The Urhobo People, Ibadan, 1978, (1995reprint).

Oyebode, Adebayo,
-- (ed.), The Transformation of Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Toyin Falola, Trenton, NJ, 2002.

Peel, J.D.Y.,
--Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba, Oxford, 1968.
--Ijeshas and Nigerians: the incorporation of a Yoruba Kingdom, Longman, 1987.
--'History, Culture and the Comparative Method: a West African Puzzle,' Ladislav Holy, (ed.), Comparative Anthropology, Oxford, UK: New York, NY, USA Blackwell, 1987.
--'Making History: the Past in the Ijesha Present,' Man, 19, 1, 1984: 111-32.
--'The Cultural Work of Yoruba Ethno-genesis,' in Tonkin, et al, History and Ethnicity, 1989: 198-215.
---'The Pastor and the Babalawo: the interaction of religions in nineteenth--century Yorubaland,' Africa, Journal of the International African Institute, Vol. 60, no.3, 1990: 338-69.
--'Poverty and Sacrifice in nineteenth-century Yorubaland: a critique of Iliffe's thesis,' JAH, Vol. 31, no. 3, 1990: 465-86.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

--and J. F. Ade Ajayi, (eds.), Peoples and Empires in African History: Essays in Memory of Michael Crowder, 1993.
--'Historicity and pluralism in some recent studies of Yoruba religion,' Review article Africa, 64, 1994: 150-166.
--Rethinking African History, Edinburgh, 1997.
--Religious Encounter and the making of the Yoruba, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.

Pemberton 111, John
and Funso Afolayan, Yoruba Sacred Kingship: A power like that of the Gods, Washington, 1996.

Pomeranz, Kenneth,
--The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the making of the modern world economy, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, c2000

Poynor, Robin,
--'Edo Influence on the Arts of Owo,' AA, 9, 4, 1978:40-45.
--'Egungun of Owo,' AA, 11, 3, 1978: 65-76.
--'Traditional Textiles in Owo, Nigeria,' AA, 14, 1, 1980: 47-5, 88.
--'Fragments of an Ivory Sword, Udamalore,' in S.M. Vogel, (ed.) Spirits and Kings, New York Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, 1981: 133-34.
--'Naturalism and Abstraction in Owo Masks,' AA, 20, 4, 1987: 56-61.
--'Ako Figures of Owo and Second Burials in Southern Nigeria,' AA, 21, 1, 1988: 62-63; 81-83; 86-87.

Quirin, James,
-- 'Caste and Class in Historical North West Ethiopia: the Beta Israel (Falasha) and Kemant, 1300-1900,' JAH, 39, 1998, 195-220.

Ranger, T.,
--'The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa,' in Hobsbawn, E. and Terence Ranger, (eds.), The Invention of Tradition, Cambridge (Cambridgeshire): New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983;
-- 'The invention of tradition revisited: the case of colonial Africa,' in T. O. Ranger and O. Vaughan, (eds.) Legitimacy and the State in 20th century Africa, London, 1993.

Ray, Benjamin C.,
Myth, Ritual and kingship in Buganda, Oxford, 1991.

Reid, R.,
--'The reign of Kabaka Nabikinge: Myth or Watershed?' HA, 24, 1997: 287-97.

Ringer, Fritz,
--'The Intellectual Field, Intellectual History and the Sociology of Knowledge,' in Peter Kasten and John Modell, (eds.) Theory, Methods and Practice in Social and Cultural History, New York, 1992: 106-114.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ryder, A.F.C.,
--'A Reconsideration of the Ife-Benin Relationship,' JAH, # V1, No. 1, 1965.
---'Dutch Trade on the Nigerian Coast during the Seventeenth Century,' JHSN, 3, 2, 1965: 195-210.
--Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897, London, 1969.

Said, E. W.,
--Orientalism, New York, 1978; Culture and Imperialism, New York, 1993

Sanders, E. R.,
-- 'The Hermitic Hypothesis: its Origin and Function in Time Perspective,' JAH, X, 1969: 321-32

Saulawa, A. M.
--'A History of Historical Writings in Nigeria since 1960 AD,' Savana, X, 1989.

Shaw, Thurstan,
-- Nigeria: Its Archaeology and Early History, London: Thames and Hudson, 1978

Schiller, Lawrence D.,
--'The Royal Women of Buganda', IJAHS, 23, 1990: 455-74.
--'"We are what we eat": ancient agriculture between the Great Lakes,' JAH, 34, 1993: 1-31

Schnepel, B.,
-- 'Continuity despite and through death: regicide and royal shrines among the Shiluk of Southern Sudan,' Africa, 61, 1991: 40-70.

Schoffeleers, Mahew,
-- 'Myth and /or History: a reply to Christopher Wrigley,' JAH, 29, 1988: 385-390.

Shinnie, Margaret,
--Ancient African Kingdoms, London, 1965.

Smith, R.S.,
--'Yoruba Armament,' JAH, V11, 1, 1967: 87-95.
-- 'A Note on the Two Shirts of Mail in the Palace at Owo in Southwestern Nigeria,' Odu, (3rd series), # 5, 1971.
--Kingdoms of the Yoruba, (3rd ed.), Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.
--Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-colonial West Africa, (2nd edn.) Madison: of University Wisconsin Press, 1989.

Sote, Adetoun,
-- The Egba-Ake Community of Abeokuta, Ibadan, 1990.

Southwold, M.
--'Bureaucracy and Chiefship in Buganda,' East African Studies, # 14, Kampala, 1961.
-- 'Succession to the throne of Buganda,' in Jack Goody, (ed.), Succession to High Office, Cambridge, 1966: 82-126.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Stone, R.H., In Africa's Forest and jungle or six years among the Yorubas, Edinburgh, 1900.

Sutton, John,
-- 'The Antecedents of the Inter-lacustrine Kingdoms,' JAH, 34, 1993: 33-64.

Talbot, P.A.,-- The Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Part 1: Historical Notes and 2: Ethnological Notes, London, 1926.

Taylor, George R.
-- (ed.), The Turner Thesis Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History, Boston; DC Heath, 1956.

Thompson, Robert F.,
'The Sign of the Divine King,' in D. Fraser and Herbert Cole (eds.), African Art and Leadership, Madison, 1972: 227-260.
--Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy, New York: Random House, 1983.

Tonkin, Elizabeth,
-- 'The Boundaries of History in Oral Performance,' HA, 9, 1982.
--'Investigating Oral Tradition,' JAH, 27, 1986: 203-213
--'Narrating Our Pasts: the Social Construction of Oral History,' Elizabeth Tonkin, et al, History and Ethnicity, London, Routledge, 1989.

Turner, Frederick Jackson,
--1893 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History,' in Billington, Ray Allen, (ed.), Frontier and Section: Selected Essays, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1961:28-36

Tutuola, Amos,
--Yoruba Folktales, Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press, 1986.

Twaddle, Michael,
'On Ganda Historiography,' HA, 1, 1974: 85-99.
'Ganda Receptivity To Change,' JAH, 15, 1974: 303-15.
'The ending of Slavery in Uganda,' in S. Miers and R. Roberts, (eds.) The End of Slavery in Africa, Madison, 1988: 119-49.
--Kakungulu and the Making of Uganda, London and Kampala, 1993: UNESCO General History of Africa, 8 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980-1993.

Usunalele, Uyilawa,
--and T. Falola, 'The Scholarship of Jacob Egharevba of Benin,' HA, 21, 1994.

Vansina, Jan,
-- 'A comparison of African Kingdoms,' Africa, , 32, 1962:324-335
---R. Mauny and L.V. Thomas, (eds.) The Historian in Tropical Africa, Oxford, 1964.
--- Kingdoms of the Savanna, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

--The Children of Woot: A History of the Kuba Peoples, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978.
--Oral Tradition as History, University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.
--Paths in the Rainforests: toward a history of political tradition in equatorial Africa, Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
--'Lessons of Forty Years of African History,' IJAHS, 25, 1992: 391-98.
--'Some perceptions on the writing of African history: 1948-1992,' Itinerario, 1992: 77-91.
--'Book Review of Ethnography and the Historical Imagination', IJAHS, 26, 1993: 417-420.
--Living with Africa, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994.

Vaughan, Olufemi,
--Nigerian Chiefs: Traditional Power in Modern Politics, 1890s -1990s, Rochester, 2000.

Vogel, J.O.,
(ed.) Encyclopedia of Precolonial Africa, London: Sage, 1997

Wallestein, Emmanuel,
--'Ethnicity and National Integration in West Africa,' CEA, 1, 1969: 129-139

Walsh, M.J.,
'The Edi Festival of Ile-Ife,' African Affairs, 47, 1948.

Watabe, Shigeyuki,
--'The Traditional Political Organizations of Yoruba Towns: a case study of Aiyedun – Ekiti in a comparative framework,' African Urban Studies: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, vol. 3, 1993: 29-89.

Webster, J.B.,
--and A.A. Boahen with M. Tidy, The Revolutionary Years: West Africa since 1800, Longman, 1980.

Wescott, R.W.,
--'Did the Yorubas come from Egypt?' Odu, # 4, 1956.

White, Hayden,
--'The Context in the Text: Method and Ideology in Intellectual History,' in Hayden White, (ed.) The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourses and Historical Representation, Baltimore, 1987: 185-213.

Willett, F.,
--'Ife and its Archaeology,' JAH, 1960, 231-4.
--'On the Funeral Effigies of Owo and Benin and the interpretation of the Life-Size Bronze –Heads from Ife,' Man, new series, 1, 1967: 34-58.
--Ife in the History of West African Sculpture, London, 1967.
--'A Survey of Recent Results in the Radiocarbon Chronology of Western and Northern Africa,' JAH, X11, 3, 1971.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

--'Ife, Art of an Ancient Nigerian Aristocracy,' D. Fraser and H. Cole, (eds.) African Art and Leadership, Madison, 1972: 209-226.
--Baubles, Bangles and Beads: Trade Contacts of Medieval Ife, London, 1977.
and J. Picton, 'On the Identification of Individual Carvers: a study of ancestor shrine carvings from Owo, Nigeria', Man, (new series), 2, #1, 1967: 62-70.

Wilson, Louis E.,
--The Krobo people of Ghana to 1892: a political and social history, Athens, Ohio, 1992.

Woolf, D. R.,
--'The Writing of Early Modern European Intellectual History, 1945-1995,' in Michael Bentley, (ed.) Companion to Historiography, London, 1997.

Wrigley, C.C.,
--'Speculations on the Economic Pre-History of Africa,' JAH, 1, 2, 1960.
--'Linguistic Clues to African History,' JAH 111, 2, 1962.
--'The River-God and the Historian: Myth in the Shire Valley and Elsewhere,' JAH, 29, 1988: 367-83.

Wyman, Walker D.,
--and Clifton B Kroeber, (eds.), The Frontier in Perspective, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957.

Wyndham, John,
--Myths of Ife, London, 1921.

Zackernuk, P.S.,
--'The Lagos Intelligentsia and the idea of Progress, 1860-1990,' in Toyin Falola, African Historiography, Longman, 1993.
--'Of Origins and the Colonial Order: Southern Nigerian Historians and the "Hermitic Hypothesis," 1870-1970,' JAH, 35, 1994: 427-455.

M

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Dissertations and theses

Adekambi, T.A., 'Owo in the 19th century,' B.A. Thesis, University of Ibadan, 1975

Akomolafe, C.O., 'Akoko Under Colonial Rule, 1900-1935,' M. Phil. University of Ife, 1976.

Awe, S. H. A., 'Owo from the Earliest Times,' M. A. Thesis, University of Lagos, 1977.

Awe, Bolanle (Mrs.) 'The Rise of Ibadan as a Yoruba Power, 1851-1893,' D.Phil. Oxford University, Oxford, 1964.

Berger, Iris,
'The Kubandwa Religious Complex of Inter-lacustrine East Africa: an historical study,' PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1973.

Eyo, Ekpo, 'Recent Excavations at Ife and Owo and Their Implications for Ife, Owo and Benin Studies,' PhD Dissertation, University Ibadan, Nigeria, 1974.

Olomola, Gabriel Ishola, 'Patterns of Inter Group Relations among the Yoruba in the Pre-colonial period, 'PhD Dissertation, University of Ife, Ile -Ife, 1977

Poynor, Robin,
'Ancestral Arts in Owo, Southwestern Nigeria,' PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, South Bend, Indiana, 1978.

Schoenbrun, David L.,
'Early History in Eastern Africa's Great Lakes region: linguistics, ecological and archaeological approaches,' PhD Thesis, Los Angeles, 1990.

Zachernuk, P. S.,
'Intellectual Life in a Colonial Context: the Nigerian Intelligentsia, 1860-1960,' PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 1991.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Appendix

1

TIME LINE

c1170 –Owo is founded
c1345- Assassination of Olowo Renrengenjen
c1398- Ogeja builds a lofty palace at Oke –Ekusi and creates the Oshorun title
c1440 – Benin's first invasion of Owo
c1481 –Benin's second invasion of Owo and Owo's loss of sovereignty
c1578- Oshogboye becomes a page at the Benin palace
c1602- Oshogboye liberates Owo from the hegemonic choke hold of Benin
c1690- Assassination of Olowo Alubiolokun
c1760- Ajaka Farokun usurps the Owo throne
C1780- Adedipe (Elewu-okun) becomes Olowo and creates the Ojomo title
c1826- Ojomo title proscribed and the first incumbent, Oludipe, is exiled to Usugwe
C1851- The British bombards Lagos island to stop the slave trade
c1861- Lagos Island is annexed and declared a British colony
C1876- Ojomo title is restored and Ojomo Agunloye returns to Owo
C1877- The Yoruba 'intertribal' wars break out - Ibadan versus the Ekitiparapo
C1879- Assassination of Olowo Adara
c1893- Intervention in the Yoruba wars and declaration of British **Protectorate.**
c1897- The capture of Benin City and declaration of a Niger Coast Protectorate c1914- The Amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigerias
c1915- The Return of Akoko to the South and creation of Ondo Province
c1949- Awolowo becomes leader of Government Business, Western Region, Nigeria
c1950- Amaka is removed from office and the Ojomo title is abolished
c1960- Nigeria attains political independence
c1963- A Republican constitution comes into effect in Nigeria
c1966- Military coups in Nigeria
c1968- Olowo Olateru Olagbegi II is removed from office
c1970- The Ojomo title is restored

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Appendix 2

The three king lists by Ashara, Elerewe and the Iloro chiefs.

Ashara	Elerewe	Ighares of Iloro Quarter
1. Ojugbelu, 1000	Ojugbelu, 1019-1070	Alaghare, (died at Upafa)
2. Imade, 1070	Imade, 1070-1106	Erinmi, (died at Upafa)
3. Kodo, 1106	Kodo, 1106-1156	Ojugbelu, (died at Upafa)
4. Agwobojoro, 1265	Agwobojoro, 1156-1209	Kese (died at Okemade)
5. Dondan, 1283	Dondan, 1209-1260	Opa
6. Adegbemi, 1313	Adegberin, 1260-1305	Ogbuya,
7. Opa, 1329	Opa, 1305-1332	Renrengenjen
8. Asunsola, 1331	Asunsola, 1332-1340	Asunsola
9. Reregenjen, 1345	Ringinjin, 1340-1346	Imagele
10. Asunsoma, 1380	Asunsoma1346-1386	Aketuta or Atekuta
11. Ogeja, 1398	Ogeja, 1386-1430	Kodo
12. Imagele, 1430	Imagele, 1430-1481	Asunsoma
13. Alamunren, 1462	Alamunren, 1481-1539	Ogeja
14. Omasan, n.d.	Omasan, 1539-1578	Amasan
15. Omaro, 1534	Omaro, 1578-1600	Omaro
16. Oshogboye, 1600	Oshogboye, 1600-1648	Oshogboye
17. Alubiolokun, 1648	Alubiolokun, 1648-1690	Ogiren
18. Otutuboson, 1690	Otutubosun, 1690-1719	Adobolokun
19. Ajagbusi-Ekon, 1719	Ajagbusi-Ekun, 1719-1760	Otutubosun
20. Ajaka, 1760	Ajaka, 1760-1781	Ajagbusi –Ekun
21. Elewu-Okun, 1781	Elewu-oku, 1781-1833	Ajaka
22. Aghagunlaiye, 1833	Aghagunlaiye, 1833-1876	Elewu-Okun
23. Adara, 1876	Adara, 1876-1880	Orimolade Aghagunghaye
24. Aladetohun, 1880	Aladetohun, 1880-1889	Adaramola/Adaranijoja
25. Atanneye, 1, 1889	Atanneye 1, 1889-1902	Aladetohun
26. Ogunoye 1, 1902	Ogunoye 1902-1913	Atanneye 1
27. Olagbegi 1, 1913	Olagbegi 1 1913-1938	Ogunoye 1
28. Atanneye 11 1938	Atanneye 11, 1938-1940	Olagbegi 1
29. Olagbegi 11, 1941	Olagbegi 11 1941-1968	Adeoye Ajike,
30. Ogunoye11, 1968	Ogunoye 11	Ogunoye 11 (Adekola)
* Olateru (Returns)	* Olateru, 1993-1998	* Olateru
31. Folagbade, 2000	Folagbade	Folagbade

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Appendix 3

List of British Administrative Officers, Owo, c1902-c1956. [1]

Ifon Dist. (Owo), Benin Province, Niger Coast Protectorate, Southern Nigeria.

District Commissioners and District Officers, (Ifon District)

1902 – 1914: District Commissioners

1902 – Reginald D. N. Raikes
1903 – J. H. M. Whitehead
1904/5 – Reginald D. N. Raikes
1906 – H. O. Swanston
1907 – W. B. Rumann
1908 – A. St. L. Hopkinson
1909 – C.W. Todd,
F. E. K. Fortecque
1909/10 – M. S. Cockin
1910 – J. H. M. Whitehead
1911 – F. L. Tabor
W. H. Cooke
1911/12 – A. L. C. Laborde
1912/13 – W. B. Rumman
W. Birrell Gray
1913/14 – R. H. J. Sasse

District Officers, (Owo Division)

1914/15 -F. B. Adams
H. N. Nevins
1915/17- H. D. La Mothe
1917 - H. G. Aveling
1918 - J. H. B. de Montmorency
1919 – H. D. La Mothe

1920-1956: Administrative Officers,
1920 – H. D. LaMothe
1920 - Major F. S. Williams Thomas, DSO.
1920/22 – Captain D.P. O'Connor, MC.
1922 – H. D. La Mothe
Captain Mackenzie
E. Burgess
1923 – H.D. La Mothe
F.E. Knapp
E. Burgess
W.J.W. Norcott
1924 – E. Bowron
E.C. Clegg

[1] NAI: Gwan, L. C., A preliminary Inventory of the Administrative records assembled from Ondo Province, Ibadan, 1963:49, 59.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

W. J.W. Norcott
1925 – Captain J. Mackenzie
Captain A. F. Pullen
1926 – A. P. Pullen
Captain E.C. Clegg
B. M. Carkeek
1927 – B. M. Carkeek
H. G. Aveling
Captain J. A. Mackenzie
Captain E.C. Clegg MC,
Mr. T.E. Purchas
1928 – J. A. Mackenzie
T.E. Purchas
1929 – Captain J.A. Mackenzie
T.E. Puchas
J. H. B. de Montmorency
H. F. Marshall
1930 – E. K. Milbourne
H. F. Marshall
1931 – E. K. Milbourne
A. F. Pullen
H. F. Marshall
1932 – A. F. Pullen
A. R. A. Dickens
J. H. Beeley
Captain J. H. B. de Montmorency
1933 – Captain J. H. Balfour de Montmorency
1934 – Captain J. H. Balfour de Montmorency
J. H. Beeley
G. G. Harris
1935 – G. G. Harris
N. A. C. Weir
1936 – Captain N. A. C. Weir
Captain R. A. Vosper
1937 – Flight/Lt. R. A. Vosper
H. K. Robinson
1938 – R. A. Vosper
D. H. V. Smith
1939 – R. A. Vosper
R. Rankine
J. H. Ellis
D. H. V. Smith
E. A. Lewis
1940 – J. H. Ellis
E. A. Lewis
1941 – J. H. Ellis
J. H. Blair
1942 – J. H. Ellis
1943/44- J. H. Ellis

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

R. J. M. Curwen
E. N. C. Dickinson
1945 – E. N. C. Dickinson
J. F. Hayley
W. K. D. Macray
1946 - E. N. C. Dickinson
J. F. Hayley
W. K. D. Macray
1947 - E. N. C. Dickinson
J. F. Hayley
W. K. D. Macray
1948 – C. E. L. Anderson
W. St. P. M. Hancock
1949 – W. St. P. M. Hancock
C. E. Iles
P. S. G. Flint
1950 – C. E. Iles
P. S. G. Flint
J. R. Josling
1951 –C. E. Iles
J. R. Northeast
J. R. Josling
I. R. P Heslop
J. D. Smith
1952 – I. R. P. Heslop
J. R. Josling
N. E. Whiting
B. E. Thompson
E. M. McConnecline,
F. J. Barrell
N. E. Whiting
1953 – J. D. Hamilton
I. D. Cameron
J. R. Josling
B. E. Thompson
1954 – I. D. Cameron
J. D. Hamilton
K. M. Hall
F. J. Barrell
F. R. Sweet
E. M. McConnecline.
1955 – C. A. Richardson
K. M. Hall
I. O Ogun
1956 – C. H. Richardson
A. C. Freed
F. A. Ogwude.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Appendix 4

Excerpts from narratives of the antecedent of Oladipo Joseph Olugbadehan narrated by his mother, Madam Eunice Tinuade Olugbadehan (nee Fayemiwo) in Lagos, Nigeria between August 13 and September 5, 1999. Mother was 82 years old when she narrated this genealogy. The writer was in Nigeria on a brief visit from the United States of America. (four weeks, August/ September, 1999)

'I was born in 1918 at Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria. A great influenza pandemic, "Ajakale arun," I was told, occurred in that year. Many people died at Owo as a result of this disease. My mother was Deborah Mijonla Alagodo Fayemiwo (nee Isijola). My father was Chief Adafin Atabanti Fayemiwo, alias '*Aranma l 'Eko teye teye*,' ('The one who sends his children to Lagos with pomp and pageantry'). You know both of them. My father was the son of Chief Alajagho Famokun, an important Ighare chief at Iloro quarter. My grandfather, Famokun became Alajagho by default because his senior brother, Asunmen, who inherited the title of Alajagho from their father, Awotale, whose title goes back to a time prior to the time of Olowo Otutubiosun, (c1690-c1719), had died without leaving a male son (had many daughters but none of his male children survived him and a woman could not inherit an Ighare chieftaincy title in Iloro quarter). So after the demise of Alajagho Asunmen, my grandfather, Famokun, his brother became the next chief Alajagho. Following tradition, after the death of Alajagho Famokun, his eldest son, Fayase, became the next Alajagho. But Chief Alajagho Fayase was always apprehensive of his brother, Fayemiwo's intentions. To reassure his brother, that he had no ambitions to usurp the title from him, my father, Fayemiwo acquired his own title, Adafin, thereby starting a new line of chieftaincy title in the family. That is why our family now has the Adafin title. The family's title was originally Alajagho.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

My mother's (Mijonla's) father, Chief Adafin Isijola, was the son of Chief Adafin Okuntirin, who was the son of Chief Adafin Akensusika of Oke-Ehin-Odi, Iloro quarter. Akensusika was the son of Adeyo, the rich princess, daughter of Olowo Otutubiosun.[2] Mijonla's mother was Ikudimbola, the daughter of the Ayere Alagha of Iyere, all blue blood. Ikudimbola had four children: Lawani, John, Mijonla and Abraham Olaturegun Isijola. My mother, Mijonla, was her only daughter.

My father, Chief Adafin Atabanti Fayemiwo, was the son of Madam Adesolabi, an Ajase-Ipo princess. Adesolabi's father, the Alajase of Ajase-Ipo near Ila Orangun, had migrated to Owo and settled there after being crowned the Alajase of Ajase-Ipo. According to this narrative, there was a civil disturbance in the town of Ajase-Ipo and he was told 'to go to sleep,' that is commit suicide and after agreeing to this directive according to convention, he escaped and fled Ajase-Ipo while his followers left behind declared him dead. On his arrival at Owo and the Olowo, having become convinced of the truth of the matter, recognized him in his capacity as a crowned ruler and so although he only presided over his own people at Ile-Oloro in Igboroko quarter, he was exempted by the Olowo from kneeling down to salute him as expected of every chief in the realm. The former Alajase never had to kneel down to pay obeisance to the Olowo on the rare occasion both rulers met. According to traditional Yoruba practice, an Oba does not kneel down to greet another Oba, '*oloja ki kunle ki oloja.*'

I want you to know the connection between the families from Ajase at the Oloro compound with another individual called Ugboloko. The father of Adesolabi was a contemporary of Ugboloko, the great grandfather of Mr. Kangun of Oludasa Street. The descendants of these people are distant cousins and they belong to the same extended family, *Ebi.*

[2] He was the father of Olowo Ajagbusi-Ekun, the father of Olowo Farokun Ajaka, Adedipe Elewuokun and

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

I want to talk about your father, my husband, Josiah Olugbadehan. He was a mentor to the late Sir Olateru Olagbegi. They were contemporaries in Government school, Owo but your father was older than Olateru and because of the affection that prevailed in those days, Olateru became a protégé of your father, Olugbadehan. Because of their relationship, Olateru was helped by your grandfather, Chief Adafin Ologede in 1940 (you know he was an Oma Igwe, an Omolowo) to gain the Owo throne among all the other candidates who were considerably more influential and older than Olateru and he became Olowo, the youngest of the nine contestants for the position. He had to perform some sacrifices at Iloro and these things were done in your father's house (at the 'ojuto,' or gutter). Their close relationship continued after Sir Olateru became Olowo.

Your father was also an intimate friend of Mr. Yeye Fakorede, a wealthy businessman. Chief Stephen Baba (Otinyengen) Aruwajoye was his cousin and clerk. (Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin also recalled that he too was a junior boy to father, Mr. Josiah Olugbadehan, who was regarded as the 'tallest' boy in Government school and the school monitor during their time there.) Your father was responsible for the education of his cousin, Chief S. A. Akingbade, the Asaba of Iloro quarter. He hid Akingbade for three years in our section of the compound so that he could attend school. His father, Chief Asaba Oluloro, (the Akowa of Iloro Quarter at the time) had threatened to kill him if he chose to attend school instead of going to the farm. He eventually relented and allowed his son to complete the standard five education at the Government school.

Josiah Olugbadehan was the son of Chief Adafin Ologede Ogunmola Ajinbuwa of Iloro quarter. Ologede was the youngest son of Prince Ajinbuwa, (*Oma Igwe or Iken*), son of Olowo Adedipe Elewu-Okun. Ajinbuwa had been made an Adafin and placed at his mother's household at chief Asaba's compound at Iloro quarter by the Olowo

---

Oludipe, among many other sons.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Adedipe Elewu-Okun in c1828. He was one of the twenty-two sons of Olowo Elewu-Okun so invested with family titles to appease them when Orimolade was made the Idaniken, heir–apparent and they were angry at the move because that foreclosed their chances of becoming the next Olowo after their father. Ologede inherited the Adafin title when his father, along with the other princes, was prevailed upon to go to the war front to defend Owo against the ravages of the Nupe forces invading Owo territory in the Akoko area. The Nupe was part of the Islamic Jihadist forces sweeping down from the northern part of Nigeria in the 19th century and their activities impinged on the lives of peoples in Owo kingdom.

Chiefs Ewu and Okuntinrin, both princes, also made their youngest sons their successors as they embarked on their fateful journey to the war front. These sons of the nobility were forced to go to the war front to fight during the wars because the commoners had been protesting against the practice whereby the children of the privileged were not being prevailed upon to fight for their fatherland as the children of the commoners (quarter head chiefs and all) were being forced to do. Hence these highly born sons of Owo had to prepare to go to the war front and fight.

The assumption of the Owo people when they prepared to go to war was that they were not likely coming back alive, if at all they returned. So on the eve of their departure, they would put their homes in order and appoint one of their sons as their successors. It was usually the youngest of the sons if the Ifa did not disqualify him. Thus Ajinbuwa selected Ologede, his youngest son, to preside over his household. Your grandfather, Ologede did this for the next seventy years. Chief Adafin Ewu chose Owoputi and Chief Adafin Okuntinrin chose his last-born son, Isijola. Ajinbuwa and Okuntinrin returned home barely alive because they were mortally wounded and they died shortly thereafter. But Ewu never returned. His family sent messengers three times to look for him in the

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

war front in the Akoko country but each of the three messengers also perished in the course of their search. They never returned to Owo.

Your grandfather, Chief Adafin Ologede Ogunmola Ajinbuwa, was the son of Madam Adetoriokun, was the daughter of chief Uwankun of Oludaiye Street in Igboroko quarter. Your paternal grandmother, (i.e. the mother of your father, Mr. Josiah Olugbadehan), was Abisatun, the daughter of chief Oronbato, also of Ogbon Oludaiye (Oludaiye street). Abisatun's mother, Odondon, was the daughter of Olamoyon. Olamoyon's mother was the daughter of Oba Elekole (king of Ikole). Olamoyon was the product of a marriage relationship contracted between the daughter of Elekole of Ikole and the Olowo of Owo, Oba Ajagbusi-Ekun. Olamoyon's mother, the princess from Ikole, came directly from Ikole to marry the Olowo of Owo in a marriage deal that appears to be an effort to cement a diplomatic relationship between Owo and Ikole to offset the assertions of the Ewi of Ado-Ekiti. (The writer did not get the meaning of this statement). Olamoyon's mother was given a sword. This was made to honor this princess, later to be a queen in her new home at Owo. This was a strange gift for a woman as no woman had ever been reported to possess a royal sword, 'ada.' Maybe hers was the first. This was a very rare occurrence in the annals of Yorubaland. When the princess arrived at Owo, she came with a boy and a girl, among the motley crowd of attendants that escorted her to her new home at Owo, carrying her belongings, with a lantern (lit up during the day) and a cat. Her father, the Elekole, gave the boy and the girl to her to provide personal services to the princess. The boy served his mistress so well and she was so fond of him that she treated him like her son. The Olowo later conferred the title of Saja, the boy's personal name, on him, when he grew up. The Elekole was highly impressed with this gesture. When the British arrived in Owo in 1897, Chief Saja was ranked sixth to the Olowo. The Saja family still retains the Oriki Cognomen) of Elekole till today:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

'Elekole, o ba laya aso, Elekole run ma so se, o ta la bose.' Translation: 'The Elekole has a lot of clothes. It was because the Elekole did not know what to do with his cloth that he decided to cover his silk wood tree, (oshe), with a white cloth.'

Odondon, Abisatun's mother, was born at Oke–Oja, the heart of Owo town. She was an Ilori (queen) of Olowo Orimolade Aghagunghaye. But she was childless, had no issue for the Olowo. Chief Oronbato was an ardent admirer of Odondon because she was so beautiful. People used to say that Odondon did not have children because she had exchanged beauty for children when God was creating her. Each time chief Oronbato met Odondon, he would jokingly say to her that if she would marry him after her stint at the palace (after the demise of the king), he would help her have children. People who heard chief Oronbato always laughed and took this as a crude joke because Odondon had never missed her menstrual period, not to mention pregnancy in her whole life up to that point. Eventually, the Olowo Orimolade died [3]and all the king's consorts had to return to their homes and were free to remarry. Odondon went back to Oke-Oja, her home and pursued a career in cloth weaving. At the cloth-weaving mill (Ukoro) she erected at her home, chief Oronbato would come around to talk and spend time with her. Their relationship blossomed and to the consternation of observers except chief Oronbato, Odondon became pregnant and she quickly hid herself. She was alarmed by the development. Oronbato had predicted nine children by Odondon but after giving birth to three - Alade, Abisatun and Adeoye (a son who later died at 6) - Odondon refused to have any more children. She said that she was satisfied with the three children.[4]

---

[3] Aghagunghaye ruled Owo kingdom for sixty years. He was an Idaniken for seventeen years and the Olowo for forty–three years. (C1816-c1833; c1833- c1875).

[4] (Mama Alade wove all kinds of cloth, an art she inherited from her mother, Odondon. I knew mama Alade when she was in her 70s. She used to weave *Seghosen, Elegheghe, Olifan, Olorimejin, Olorofun, Atipan, Ashigbo*, etc. She was a one woman textile factory at Iloro quarter, where she lived with her sister, Abisatun at chief Asaba's compound till her death in the 1950s).

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

You, Oladipo, was born in your father's bedroom at Chief Asaba's compound. As your delivery was getting close, your father left the bedroom to sleep in his parlor for me to be comfortable. Your birth was a celebrated event in the family. The whole Asaba compound of a couple hundred people expected your delivery like the birth of a king. Your grandfather had predicted that you will be a great child. Although the Owo Maternity Center had been established, I could not deliver you there because the place had no facilities for delivering babies yet. As a result, it was arranged that as soon as I broke water, four nurses were to be sent from the Maternity Center to take the delivery and remove us to the Maternity Center for care for a few days. With the help of the nurses, your delivery was not painful at all in spite of the fact that you were very big. When my mother saw how big you were, she exclaimed that you were as big as Mr. Agidee, an Urhobo man living in Owo at the time. Mr. Agidee, a business man, was the richest man in Owo during in the 1940s, he had timber concessions with the whiteman in Shiluko (now Sapele). Some among my family started calling you Agidee and John Bull, one of the British colonial administrators in town. That is why some of them were calling you those nicknames when you were young.

Your grandfather, Chief Adafin Ologede, who had been the most excited about your birth said that he did not want anybody calling you unknown names. He said that he had a name for you. He said that you will carry this name to the ends of the world because you were meant for great things. He had invited the cream of the important people in Iloro quarter and the other parts of Owo for the occasion. On that day, your grandmother, mama Abisatun carried you on her laps at your naming. You were given the name Oladipo with the cognomen Olaogbebikan. Then your grandfather recited the Oriki.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Cognomen

Oladipo, omo ishesi okun

O to Ado, e kin Ewi: at Ado, he did not greet the Ewi
O to Ijesha, e kin Arun eja: at Ilesha, he did not greet the Aruneja (ruler)
U ghun o ni' ba yo ju be suli: He said that he has more important fathers at home
A mi' ba kankan bene s'ade: With tightly set fathers as beads in a crown
E le yin jogun erin: The owner of a complete set of teeth, the inheritor of laughter
Imama, Olaogbebikan: Wonderful, affluence is not restricted to one place.
Oladipo, oma ishesi okun: Oladipo, a son from beyond the seas

Then every one of your father's household, knelt down and worshipped you. That is why your aunt, Adegbola, always knelt down to salute you, reciting your oriki on her knees, each time she sees you. Remember?

The following people were present at your naming:

1. Chief Ajana Adegbegha

2. Chief Asaba Oluloro (the Akowa of Iloro quarter at the time, with his police orderly)

3. Chief Inonren Aladenuyi (father of Chief Inonren Adetunji)

4. Chief Adafin Atabanti Fayemiwo (your maternal grandfather)

5. Chief Alajagho Alamana (maternal grandfather's intimate friend)

6. Mr. Yeye Fakorede (your father's intimate friend)

7. Chief Alajagho Yeye J.B.

8. Chief Alajagho Olotu Dudu

9. Chief Adanigbo Ofe

10. Chief Adafin Omolayoyo

11. Chief Adafin Umonehin

12. Chief Adafin Ologede (your paternal grandfather and the celebrant)

13. Madam Deborah Mijonla Alagodo (your maternal grandmother)

And so many other people.....

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

I want to talk about my own mother side. I want to let you know the connection between my mother and Iyere. Chief Alagha, the Ayere of Iyere, was the father of my grand mother, Ikudimbola. Ikudimbola's mother was the wife of Ojomo Agunloye but she refused to go with her husband into exile when the Ojomo Oludipe's family went to Usugwe in c1826. She had a daughter with Ojomo Agunloye before their separation named Adeparusi, (she later became the mother of chief Eminiken of Ijebu quarter). After she had refused to follow her husband Agunloye with his family into exile and following their departure, she married Ayere Alagha. For this reason, Agunloye became angry with Ayere Alagha. She eventually had a daughter for Alagha named Ikudimbola.

When Ojomo Agunloye returned from exile in 1876, he challenged Ayere Alagha to a duel. Both of them were very important chiefs in Owo and they were next door neighbors. Chief Ojomo Agunloye ordered his men to take the land of Alagha stretching from Okerogho in Iyere to the headwaters of Obukele River towards Ijebu quarter. If Ayere Alagha and the people of Iyere came around to farm in the land, Ojomo Agunloye had commanded his men to drive them away or bring them to his palace in chains. Agunloye appropriated the land and it has become part of Ijebu area ever since. That is why the Owo singer says that:

> *'Ugbo pe du 'gbo ekuku, Eluju pe de luju agbanyin, Omi pe do 'mi ya mu ren Obukele de d'omi Baba ghon Ojomo,' meaning: 'It does not take long before a forest becomes a jungle, neither does it take long before a savannah becomes a desert, it does not take long before a river becomes that of another, see, Obukele now belongs to their father, the Ojomo.'*

Chief Alagha did not take up the challenge of Ojomo Agunloye but he also did not give up his wife.

The sister of my great grandmother, Alagha's wife, had married Olowo Elewu-Okun. The offspring of this marriage, a girl, later grew up to become a much beloved woman - beautiful and spoiled by gifts and riches in slaves and material objects: gold, money,

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

jewelry, clothes, slaves and other material possessions. But she eventually died, leaving no heir, no child. She was childless. Her name, Olaboye, became a bye-word for materialism. She was nicknamed the 'material girl.' When she died, her possessions both human and material were distributed among distant relatives at chief Oshuporu's compound where she had lived till her death in 1883.

When Ojomo Agunloye heard of Olaboye's death and that her belongings had been taken over by the people at chief Oshuporu's compound, he decided to visit the place. In fact, he stormed the place. Ojomo Agunloye came at the head of a 60-gunner contingent, all on horseback. He came with his retinue of sharp shooters, big drums and fanfare. When he arrived at the compound, he had it surrounded and he then, while still on his horse, demanded that all the properties that had been stolen from Olaboye be turned over to him immediately or he would burn the place down. He told the people that the properties were not meant for him but they were meant for his daughter, Adeparusi, born to him by his former wife, now the wife of Ayere Alagha. She was the niece of Olaboye. Hurriedly, the people gathered together all the properties they could get right there and then and promised to recover the rest as soon as possible. The properties were turned over to the attendants of Ojomo Agunloye. Among the properties retrieved immediately were twenty-eight slaves, gold trinkets, clothes of all kinds, money in cowry and beads. The slaves carried the properties and themselves to the Ojomo's palace. Chief Ojomo Agunloye then turned these properties over to his daughter, Adeparusi.

Meanwhile, the daughter of Olaboye's sister born to Ayere Alagha, my grand mother, Ikudimbola, who was married to chief Adafin Isijola at Iloro quarter, heard what the father of her sister, Ojomo Agunloye, had done in retrieving the properties of her aunt from chief Oshuporu's compound and that the property had been turned over to her sister, angrily went to confront Ojomo Agunloye. But Ojomo Agunloye was very pleasant to

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

her. He told her that she should have been his daughter but for the exile. He then said that she too was entitled to her share of the booty and so she should get together with her sister, Adeparusi, to share the property as it belonged to both of them equally. The two sisters met and shared the property. As a result of her share, Ikudimbola became very rich as soon as her share was handed over to her. Both sisters became enormously wealthy by Owo standards at the time. Added to their royal births and marriages, they also became enormously rich. They thus occupied a special place among the rich and noble in Owo. From Ikudimbola's share of the properties, her daughter, my grandmother, Mijonla Alagodo, inherited fourteen slaves, among other items of property, when she became an adult. But she lost the slaves when the British Lagos colony Government emancipated all slaves in 1902 in Nigeria. [5]

One of the daughters of Adeparusi, the daughter of Ojomo Agunloye, became an Ilori to the Deji of Akure, Oba Afunbiowo Adesida I and she was the mother of Adeshewunmi, the Deji's heir –apparent. However, he died before the demise of his father, Adesida 1. I knew Adeshewunmi firsthand because he was my uncle. He would give me money when I met him at Akure when I was growing up.

I want to relate an incident on my father side that involved my grandfather, Chief Alajagho Famokun. You remember that Chief Adafin Fayemiwo was the son of Chief Alajagho Famokun, the father of chief Alajagho Fayase, Fayemiwo and Abiodun (Agbaje). The last born of their mother, Madam Fatuma, was the wife of Chief Agbaje Abodi of Imola Street. She was born to Mate, an ugly looking man, a junior brother to Chief Alajagho Famokun. Mate had inherited my father's mother when her husband

[5] However, the writer knew some of those who continued to live at my grandmother's compound at Oke-Ehin-Odi when he was growing up. Their names were Migbatone, Gbeyeka, Iyenmituen, Openiyeke, Duduelu, etc.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Famokun died. That is why madam Fatuma did not look anything like my father; she looked like her father, Mate.

Chief Alajagho Famokun had nine wives, one of whom was named Alabomi, a friend of Yeye Oluwa (head of the king's consorts) to Olowo Orimolade Aghagunghaye. The two women were very good friends but they had no children. On one occasion, there arose an argument between Alabomi and her husband, Chief Alajagho Famokun. Alabomi threatened her husband, chief Famokun, that she would hurt him for disciplining her. Her husband heard the threat but dismissed it as a woman's idle talk. Three days after the argument, chief Alajagho was summoned to the king's palace. When he got there, he was confronted with the allegation that he had been hoarding ivory (elephant tusks) and had been smuggling elephant tusks to Benin. Olowo Aghagunghaye asked Chief Alajagho Famokun the reason for his shabby treatment of him.

In those days it was treason for a citizen to have elephant tusks in his possession. It was the king who had that right. All elephant tusks were to be turned over to the ruler. In the case of Chief Alajagho Famokun, he had inherited some of the tusks from his father, Chief Alajagho Awotale, who was an elephant hunter. In fact, he had been a regular supplier of elephant tusks to Benin traders from the time of Olowo Otutubiosun. His son, Chief Alajagho Famokun, continued the tradition and even had a professional elephant killer, an *Elegba,* who brought a steady supply of the tusks to him on a regular basis and he added the supply to his family collection. It was this that Alabomi reported to the Olowo. She knew the consequences of the Olowo getting to know about this stash.

Naturally, Chief Alajagho Famokun denied this charge and said that he did not have any store of ivories anywhere in his possession. The king then ordered that his home be searched while everybody living with chief Famokun was ordered to come with the

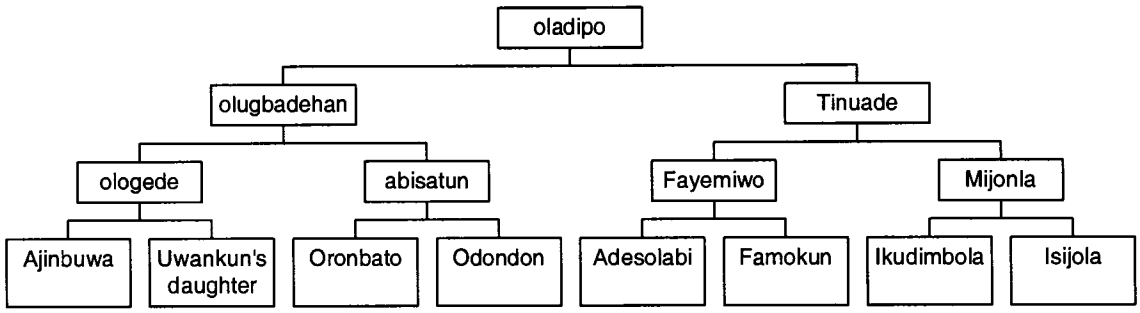
Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

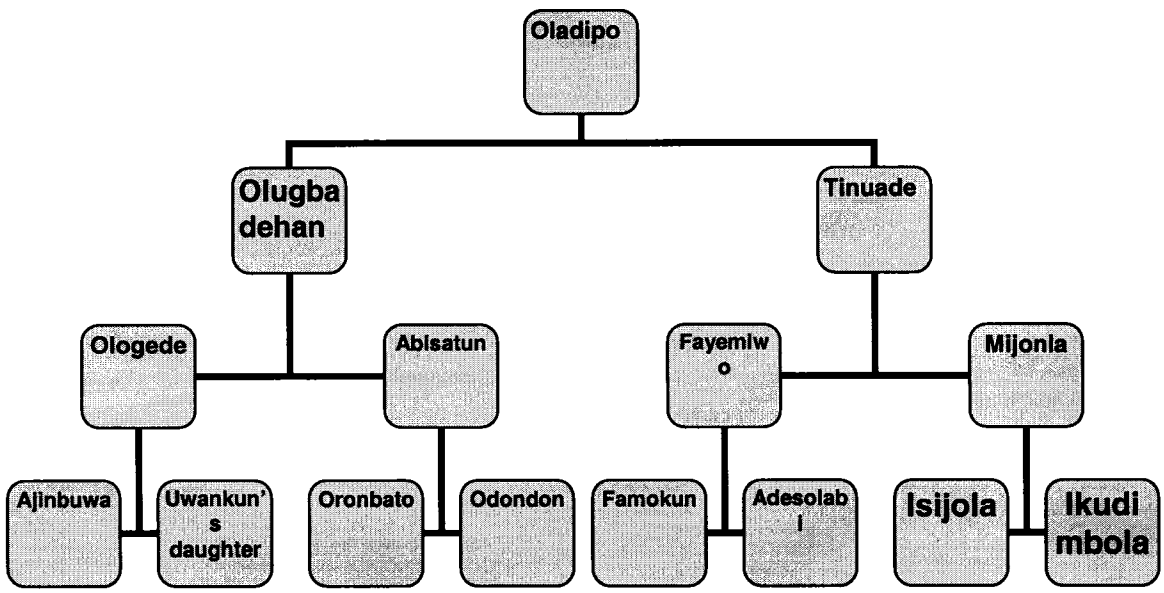
orderlies to the palace. The search revealed a cache of tusks and other very valuable products and a report was submitted to the king.

Aghagunghaye was a very wicked ruler whose savagery knew no bounds. He was enraged by the find at Chief Alajagho Famokun's compound and he threatened to behead chief Famokun. But he was reminded that the offender was an Ighare chief and so could not be executed. This is part of the unwritten constitution of Owo. In lieu of that, the Olowo decided to confiscate everything belonging to Chief Alajagho Famokun. He told him to choose one of his nine wives and after making the choice, the king told him to leave the palace. The king seized all the other people and the properties, which had been brought over from Famokun's home. Chief Famokun left the palace dejected because he had now lost all that belonged to him to the Olowo Aghagunghaye.

People came to congratulate chief Famokun for returning home alive although he lost all he had to the king except the wife he chose. Fortunately, within six months, Orimolade was dead. He had ruled Owo for sixty years. It is the traditional duty of the Ighare chiefs of Iloro quarter to perform the burial rites of the Olowo. When the Iloro Ighare chiefs were informed of the king's death, Chief Alajagho Famokun told the messengers that unless all his properties were restored to the least item and more, the Ighare chiefs would not perform the rituals connected with the burial of the Olowo. 'His dead body will be left for the dogs to eat.' Within hours all that were seized from Chief Alajagho Famokun were restored to him. Meanwhile, madam Alabomi had disappeared from Owo as she was being sought for execution.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.





Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Appendix 5

. Populations of Yoruba Towns in Nigeria in 1952

City	Population	Density (if available)
Ibadan	459,200	55,555/sq mi in 1960
Lagos	276,400	67,000; 111,000; 141,000 in 3 wards
Ogbomosho	129,500	69,800
Oshogbo	122,700	
Ife	110,800	
Iwo	100,000	
Abeokuta	84,500	10,600
Oyo	72,100	20,600
Ilesha	71,800	
Iseyin	49,700	
Ede	44,800	
Ilorin	41,000	
Ondo	36,200	
Ikerre	35,600	
Owo	30,700	
Shagamu	30,100	
Ado-Ekiti	24,700	
Ijebu-Ode	24,600	
Shaki	22,100	

Krapf-Askaris, Eva, Yoruba Towns and Cities, London, 1969:29.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Appendix 6

Owo/Edo Terminology Correspondences [6]

Edo (Benin)	TITLES	Owo
Edaiken (heir apparent)		Idaniken (heir apparent)
Ezomo of Uzebu		Ojomo of Ijebu (or Ujebu)
Oliha (ranks first among the Uzama Nihiron chiefs, who crown the Oba)		Olisa (ranks first in order among Iloro Ighare chiefs, who crown Olowo)
Uwangue		Uwangwe
Ologboshere		Ologboshere
Ero		Ero
Eriyo		Ariyo
Eribo		Aribo
	PLACE NAMES	
Uselu village (home of Edaiken)		Uselu (home of Idaniken)
Uzebu village (under Ezomo)		Ujebu Quarter (under Ojomo)
Usama (Oba lives in Uzama during Coronation)		Usama (Olowo stays at Usama during part of coronation)
Ogbe (oba's quarter)		Ehinogbe (quarter behind the palace; "ehin"-"back")

Appendix 7

PARAPHERNALIA AND RITUALS TERMS

Ezuzu (fan)	Ejuju (fan)
Ada (state sword)	Ada (state sword)
Udahae (band of beads around the heads of chiefs)	Udaigha (chief's head beads)
Ododo (imported red cloth of chiefs)	Adodo (imported red cloth of chiefs)
Uru (earthenware pots for altar)	Uru (earthenware pots for altar)
Olakpa (red mud for painting altar)	Olupa (red for painting altar r)

[6] After Robin Poynor, 'Ancestral Arts in Owo, Southwestern Nigeria,' PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, South Bend, Indiana, 1978:239.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

AGE GRADE TERMS

Otu (company or rank)	Otu (company or age set; company of chiefs)
Igbama (junior elder, usually middle age set in outlying Edo groups)	Igbama (middle age set)
Igele (prefer0elder set)	Ighare (elder)
Irhuen (ceremony marking passage from one age set to another, includes the taking of a new cloth, the giving of a feast, and the participation in mock wrestling matches to mark the occasion)	Ero (company marking the passage from the senior age grade to the rank of elder, includes the taking of a new cloth, the giving of a feast feast, and participation in mock wrestling matches to mark the occasion)

it should be noted that correspondences in terminology do not necessarily mean Benin to Owo influences. It is probable that some are Yoruba to Benin transactions, since the ruling family of Benin supposedly descends from Yoruba ancestors. We may be confident that some titles and ritual terminology were brought with the Yoruba dynasty. Some may even be Owo to Benin influences, and others may be the results of a third entity working on both Owo and Benin.

Seghosen – a traditional prestige cloth woven on upright looms by Owo women. Its pattern consists of a repeated diamond within a diamond motif.

Udamalore - a decorative ceremonial sword or dagger form used in the orufonran costume. It may be made of ivory, brass, or wood covered with imported trade beads.

Uja -the Owo orisa of hunters.

Ujase - an Owo division of egungun, said to have come from the Midwest. See Appendix e.

Ujin – the first stopping place on the original journey from Ife to Owo. Some versions State that the Olowo fought his selfish brothers at this point and carried away the gifts they had been given by their father.

Ugbama – see Igbama.

Uka – an Owo ward in Ehinogbe quarter. The Uka people were brought as slaves from modern Edo state. Their masquerade tradition, although called egungun, seems to stand apart from other Owo masquerades.

Ukin – probably a potto, a nocturnal, arboreal animal. The animal figures in a folk tale used in explaining the use of the ram as the primary sacrificial animal.

Upafa – a site southwest of Owo where the group from Ife stopped to live. They were driven from the area by the indigenes that fought them with the supernatural forces of lightning. Also called Ipafa.

Upe – state trumpet; also called 'Imeme Egwa.'

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Owo Burials

Name	Type of Burial	Time Period	Description
Ekure aga	interment after death	as soon as possible	The body is wrapped in mats, carried through town by groups of musicians and singers, and buried in a simple grave
Oposi	originally a part of a pre-interment ceremony, but now a separate "stage" of burial or a second burial.	several days after death	A special palm rib coffin is borrowed from the Osowe of Ehinogbe quarter and decorated with head ties and expensive cloths. The body is left in state at home. The empty coffin represents deceased in a procession through town. The celebration. Interment follows. The coffin is returned to the Osowe
Asigbo	may be a "stage" of interment, as Oposi, or may be a second burial later, if necessary money is not available	several days after death as in Oposi, or may be performed year's later	A further elaboration of the Oposi celebration, the asigbo celebration makes use of a specially woven black (or indigo) and white striped cloth. Asigbo is performed only for a few, for the cost is expensive and special permission must be obtained to weave he cloth.
Ako	second burial	anywhere from three months to many years interment, determined by the accumulation of wealth for payment	This expensive, time-consuming celebration takes place over a seventeen day period. Special cloths are made and an image of the deceased is carved and carried through the streets before it is buried. Only high chiefs and their parents may be mortalized in this way.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Appendix 8

Glossary of Owo words and terminology

Abiroro – see Ighele.
Ada – the sword of office of the Olowo
Ade - crown
Adugbo – quarter; ward
Afin – the palace of the oba of a Yoruba kingdom
Agbe market – a five –day market in Owo. A five-day market is one which takes place every fourth day according to our system of reckoning.
Agherebe – an annual ritual performed in honor of Uja, god of hunting, Agheregbe is also performed when large, powerful animal, such as a leopard or an elephant, is killed.
Aghokun – a chiefly costume consisting of a high beaded collar and beaded bands across the chest. The beads are coral or jasper and are worn over imported white cloth.
Agogo – iron gong.
Aguntan – sheep; ewe.
Ajana – head of Isaipen Quarter and one of the high chiefs of Owo.
Aje – witch.
Ako – the highest grade of burial in Owo. In Ako, which is actually a second burial, a life-size puppet is carved to represent the deceased during prolonged ceremonies. At the end of the seventeen day period, the puppet is buried.
Akoko – the people who occupy a division just north of Owo. Large parts of Akoko Division were once under Owo control.
Akowa – head of Iloro Quarter. The Akowa chieftaincy is rotated among certain titled families in Iloro.
Alafin – ruler of Oyo.
Alaghaiye – See Ojugbelu.
Alale of Ilale – ruler of Idashen, a group of scattered villages south of Owo, most of which claim to be autochthonous to the area. The Alale is said to have descended to the spot on a chain from heaven, 'Agbokun.'
Ameri – a titled bestowed on a wife of the Olowo; sometimes interpreted as 'queen.'
Amunren – one of the satellite villages of Owo. It is ruled by the Alamunren. The first Alamunren was said to be an Owo prince.
Apara – thunder.
Ape – a ceremonial sword used in chiefly ritual in Owo. It corresponds to the eben used in the Benin court.
Arere – See Ojugbelu.
Ashigbo – a specially woven ritual cloth used for burial in Owo; a special type of burial limited to noble families in Owo.
Aso ododo – red, imported wool cloth used in the Orufanran chieftaincy costume.
Asunlola – See Ojugbelu*
Babalawo – 'father who has the secret,' priest of the Ifa oracle; diviner.
Benin – a large Edo-speaking kingdom some seventy miles south of Owo. Benin's power spread over large parts of southern Nigeria before British domination in 1897. Owo is believed to have been a vassal state of Benin at various

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

times in her history and many of her cultural traits relate more to Benin than to other Yoruba groups.

Ebi – the extended family.

Eben – a ceremonial sword used in court ritual of Benin. It corresponds in form and function to the ape of Owo.

Edo–speaking peoples: peoples who live in southern Nigeria and can be divided into four main sections - the Edo proper of the Benin Kingdom, the Ishan to the northeast of Benin, the northern Edo which includes the Etsako, the Ivbiosakon, and the Ineme, and the Urhobo and Isoko of the Niger Delta area. The term 'Edo' is applied to those who speak Bini or related dialects.

Efene – a settlement that existed on the present site of Owo when the Olowo and his people first arrived from Ife. The community of '"twenty-seven houses' was conquered by the Owos and forced to move to the outskirts of the area. Their ruler, the Elefene, was eventually killed by the Owos. The Olisagho, a ritual office in Owo, was the servant of Elefene who betrayed him to the Owos.

Egbe – an alternate term for Otu, age grade association or social association.

Ehin-Ogbe – the quarter of Owo ruled by the Osere and originally established for aliens. In Yoruba, 'ehin' means 'behind.' In Benin, 'Ogbe' is the Oba's quarter.

Ekiti – the hilly area northwest of the Owo/Ondo area and thus the Yoruba peoples that inhabit the area.

Ekure aga – the lowest form of burial in Owo. In ekure aga, the body is wrapped in mats and carried through town accompanied by musicians and singers before it is buried in a simple grave.

Ekusi – a ward in Isaipen Quarter; a collection of people whose ancestry is traced to the Akoko area.

Elefene – legendary ruler of Efene See Efene.

Elerewe –a powerful chieftaincy of Igboroko Quarter. The present holder of the title is a young man who was chosen for the title while still his twenties by his elderly father. He is respected by many Owo people for his knowledge of Owo history which his elderly father taught him.

Emu – palm wine.

Emure-ile – a town some six miles northwest of Owo, founded from Emure, Ekiti. It is ruled by the Elemure, who paid tribute to the Olowo.

Eperin – elephant tusk; ivory.

Erin – elephant; animal.

Erenla Ugbo – "cow of hearing", a cow given by the family of a deceased chief to the other chiefs of Owo to announce the death.

Ero – a festival performed every six, seven or nine years (following the Ero of the Olowo) to initiate men into the are of elders' age group. After the performance of Ero, the elder is exempt from labor. The men of Iloro Quarter are allowed to perform Ero at an earlier age than others, although the procedure is the same.

The Ero process begins with the candidate cultivation a plot of land called his "Ero farm" during the planting season. A number of food crops are planted. Then during the Igogo festival, which takes place every year near harvest, in august or September, the actual ceremonies begin. On the first day of igogo the eldest daughter or the wife of the candidate begins to weave a special black cloth with gray stripes (girijo). On that day and every succeeding day until the end of Igogo, the candidate must feast his relatives

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

and friends.

On the eighth day, he provides a feast for the younger age grades and participating in mock wrestling matches in public. The following day the candidate carries bundles of leaves and gives them to the junior age grade members who accompany him in a procession through town. Each member of the younger age grades carries a pole with which he pounds rhythmically on the ground. They are followed by the female members of the candidate's family, who carry folded cloths which they beat with cowhide fans. Thus music is provided, for the use of drums is forbidden during the Igogo festival The candidate, whose head is now shaven, wraps his girijo cloth around his waist and dances with his entourage to the palace to pay homage to the Olowo. Then he proceeds to dance around town, calling at the homes of relatives and friends. Eight days are spent dancing through town and feasting friends and relatives. On the eighteenth day, after the conclusion of the Igogo festival, the candidate leads his entourage of friends and relatives to his Ero farm, this time accompanied to the music of drums and flutes. At the farm, each member of the group is allowed to take as much produce as he can carry. They then return home the same day. On having performed Ero, the candidate is advanced to the rank of Ighare and is retired from all public service, although he may serve in an advisory capacity. Ero is not connected with the taking of titles. A man may have taken a title before he has performed Ero, or he may take a title after Ero. Even the Olowo is expected to perform Ero, and an Olowo who has performed the ceremony may select his own successor. Men who have hereditary titles may also choose their successors after Ero.

In two Owo communities, Iyere and Ipele, women may perform Ero. However, in Owo proper, women do not.

Ero – a chieftaincy title in Owo, not to be confused with Ero initiation.

Esu – the personification of and the orisa of mischief, chaos, disorder, the unpredictable. Esu, the trickster god, must be consulted before contacting any other orisa, because he is also the messenger of the gods. Esu is worshipped all over Yoruba land.

Etu – a narrow-loom cloth of black (or indigo) with white pin-striping. It is said to be an 'Ilorin' or a 'Kwara state' cloth. It confers dignity and respect on the wearer.

Head – the individual's head is worshipped in both Yorubaland and in Benin. In Yoruba-land, it symbolizes luck. A man normally sacrifices to his head until his father dies, at which point he sacrifices to his father. Among the Bini, the Head symbolizes behavior in this world, the capacity to organize one's actions in such a way as to survive and prosper.

Idaniken – heir apparent to the Olowo. The Idaniken may be appointed by an Olowo who has already performed the Ero. Otherwise the successor to the throne is selected by the royal family and approved by the kingmakers. The word Idaniken corresponds to the Bini word 'Edai'niken,' heir-apparent to the Oba.

Idasen – a collection of scattered villages to the south of Owo, ruled by the Alale of Ilale. The villages are Ilale-ile, Ilale-oko, Isijogun, Ijeguma, Amurin, Ulemo, and Ujelu.

Ifa – the divination system used by the Yoruba. The Babalawo or diviner may discover the destiny of the individual through Ifa and prescribe necessary steps to alter an

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

undesirable fate. The god Orunmila or Oronmuola is the orisa of order and destiny, and thus the god associated with Ifa.

Ife- a Yoruba city and kingdom believed by the Yoruba to be the 'navel of the world' or the place where creation took place. Almost all Yoruba kings, as well as the Oba of Benin, trace their ancestry to Ife.

Igbama – also Ugbama; the middle age-grade association, responsible in Owo for Military duties, the maintenance of roads and public buildings and the carrying out of other community tasks.

Ighele – also Abiroro; those men who have graduated from the senior age-grades but have not taken a title; untitled elders.

Igbemo- also igbimo; the village council.

Igboroko – the quarter in Owo founded for the descendants of Olowos, ruled by the Ojumu.

Ighare – elder; one who has performed the Ero; a member of the Are age-grade.

Igogo festival – annual, seventeen-day Owo festival in honor of the goddess Oronsen, favorite wife of the ninth Olowo. The festival is a re-enactment of the activities which are said to have taken place when Oronsen fled from the palace. When she was eventually found in the bush, she refused to return but demanded that a festival be celebrated yearly in her honor in order to ensure the welfare of the kingdom. The Oronsen festival is apparently merged with a new yam festival and with a ceremony in which Owo chiefs swear their allegiance to the Olowo. See also Oronsen.

Ilale- ile – See Idasen.

Ilale- oko – See Idasen.

Ijebu – an Owo quarter which, according to tradition, was once a satellite township on the outskirts of Owo town. An Olowo, Elewuokun, wanted to reward his brother Oludipe for his aid in gaining the crown for Elewuokun. He gave him Ijebu as a Reward, a fiefdom, and made him the Ojomo, who has many of the privilege reserved for a king.

Ijegunma – See Idasen.

Ujelu – See Idasen.

Ulema – See Idasen.

Ileto – the village.

Iloro – an Owo quarter settled by those chiefs who were said have accompanied the Olowo on the trip from Ife. The political power of the Iloro chiefs, sometimes outranking that of the Olowo himself, eventually waned as aliens began to move into the city and powerful Olowos gave political power to chiefs of alien origin. The Iloro Chiefs still retain ritual importance and play key roles in the coronation of burial of the Olowo.

Imariwo – young palm fronds used in ritual context to demarcate sacred precincts or as part of the decoration of shrines, sacrificial animals or masqueraders.

Imemegwa – See Upe.

Ipafa – See Upafa

Ipele - a satellite town seven miles southeast of Owo, said to have been founded from Ighonren in Benin during the reign of the twelfth Olowo. Ipele is ruled by the Atiba.

Upenmen – a satellite town five miles north of Owo, said to have been founded from Benin.

It is ruled by the Olupenmen.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Irogho- See Urogho.

Isaipen – an Owo quarter founded as a place of residence for the slaves of the Olowo. It is governed by the Ajana.

Ishan – an Edo area north of Benin. Several artistic forms found in the Ishan area have parallels in Owo, e.g. the ram heads used on altars to the ancestors.

Isijogun – See Idasen.

Isuada – a satellite village five miles northwest of Owo, said to be founded from Ife or from Owo. It is ruled by the Asuada.

Isho – a satellite town twelve miles west of Owo, said to have originated from Ife. Owo claims that Isho paid allegiance to the Olowo in the past, but Isho now refutes this. It is ruled by the Oloba and formerly by the Olumo. Some myths in Isho claim The Oloba descended from heaven along with the Alale of Ilale.

Yara – a wall and moat system around the city of Owo. Parts of the system still survive. The first 'Yara' according to legend, was dug by Oshogboye, sixteenth Olowo, as a defense against Benin. There is evidence of a double system of walls having existed. The Benin term for a similar system there is Iya.

Iyere – a satellite town about two miles southeast of Owo, said to have been there before the arrival of the Owos. It is ruled by the Ayere.

Jekri – also Itsekiri; a group of people south of Benin, said to speak a dialect of Yoruba. The Owos claim close linguistic relationship to the Jekri.

Kingmaker – a group of powerful chiefs in Owo who must ratify the selection of the successor to the Olowoship throne by the royal family.

Koko - a port on the creeks below Benin City, claimed as an outlet for European trade by Owo since the 15th century.

Nupe – an Islamized group in north central Nigeria. In the nineteenth century, the Nupe took over parts of Yorubaland and made raids on the outskirts of the Owo kingdom.

Oba – the king; the term applies both to the king of an important area and to the chief of a smaller area.

Oduduwa – also Odudua or Olofin; the first ruler of the Yoruba kingdom of Ife, said to be the father of all Yoruba kings and the king of Benin. He is considered to be the god who descended from heaven on a chain to create earth.

Ogbele – a type of drum.

Ogbon – ward.

Ogboni – a traditional secret society of elders which discussed political affairs to make decisions in civil and criminal disputes. Today the political duties of the Ogboni society have passed to the local administrations, and their powers are limited to ceremonial occasion. In Owo the ogboni is referred to as Gbambosun or Eleta.

Ogho – the Owo name for the town of Owo, said to mean 'respect' or 'honor.' It is also the name of a sacred symbol or deity worshipped at Owo

Ogun – orisa of iron

Ogwaba – a sub chief of the Sasere. Ogwaba is credited with having brought to Owo the slave woman who introduced the asigbo funerary cloth. The Ogwaba family shares ownership rights to the cloth with the Sasere family.

Ojomo – the third ranking Owo chief, head of Ijebu quarter. The Ojomo enjoys many privileges held only by ruling obas, but he does not wear a fringed crown. The office was discontinued by Olowo Olagbegi II in 1949 but was reinstituted by Olowo Ogunoye II in 1968.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Ojugbelu – the name of the first Olowo, son of Oduduwa of Ife. The first Olowo has also been called Arere, Omologhaiye, Asunlola, and Alaghaiye.

Oju'bo – See Oju Ibo.

Oju Ibo – also called Oju'bo and Oju'po; the ancestral shrine and altar in Owo. In noble families, the oju Ibo is decorated with relief carvings. Annual celebrations for the ancestors take place at the shrine.

Ojumu – the highest ranking Owo chief, head of Igboroko quarter.

Oju'po – variations of Oju Ibo.

Oka – an Akoko Yoruba town north of Owo

Oke Imade – also Oke'made; a site five miles southwest of Owo where the Owos settled In the Idashen territory just prior to moving to the present site.

Okeluse – a trading town south of Owo, just north of Benin.

Oke'made – See Oke Imade

Okin – the "king of birds" whose white tail feathers are used in the hair of the Olowo on ritual occasion.

Okiti asigbo – the hill in the center of Owo town. The first palace of the Olowo was situated at Okiti asigbo. Today the town council buildings are located there.

Okun – coral or jasper chieftaincy beads.

Olokun – god of the sea, granter of wealth and prosperity. Olokun was a major deity of Benin and seems to have been of prime importance in Owo in the past.

Olorisa – old women who worship orisa agbaiye.

Olorun – the Yoruba high god, called Orisa agbaiye in Owo.

Olowo – the king of Owo. The first Olowo was the youngest son of Olofin, king of Ife. Thirty, thirty-one, or thirty-two Olowos are believed to have reigned since the first left Ife.

Olu – a title prefix for the ruler of a town – e.g., the Olupenme is the ruler of Upenmen.

Oludasa – a chief in Igboroko quarter in Owo. Oludasa's Oju'bo (ancestral altar) is one of the best preserved in Owo. The osanmasinmi (ram heads) were lost in political fires in 1968.

Olupa – red mud used to paint Owo ancestral shrines.

Oluserepe – the set of drums, four in number, granted by the Olowo to only certain high Chiefs.

Omologhaiye – See Ojugbelu

Omoogho – the name given the first Olowo by Oduduwa or Olofin, meaning 'a respectable child.'

Ondo – a Yoruba kingdom to the west of Owo. Owo citizens claim linguistic similarities with Ondo.

Oni – the title of the ruler of the Kingdom of Ife.

Oposi – coffin; also a type of burial in Owo. In the Oposi burial, a coffin is used to represent the body. Originally the ritual of Oposi was a part of the interment process, but now it is a separate stage which takes place after burial.

Ora – a ward in Ehinogbe quarter.

Ore – a former festival in which Owo chiefs swore allegiance to the Olowo. The celebration was discontinued in the first half of the twentieth century.

Oriki – Yoruba name or praise poem. Each one receives one at his/her birth.

Orisa – a deity, god, spirit.

Orisa agbaiye – the Owo high god, god of the universe. In Owo Orisa agbaiye has his own cult in which sacrifice and ritual is performed by priestesses dressed in white. All sacrifices are white and ritual takes place in the open, since he cannot

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

be defined in space.

Oronmuola – Owo variation on 'Orunmila,' god of divination; personification of the predictable, order.

Oronsen – an Owo goddess. She was the wife of the ninth Olowo, Reregenjen. Oronsen was from Afo. The young and beautiful favorite wife of the Olowo inspired jealousy among the other wives, who discovered her taboos and saw to it that they were done in her presence. Oronsen fled in terror to the bush and refused to return. She insisted that an annual celebration must take place in her honor in order to maintain the welfare of Owo. The celebration is the Igogo festival, performed each August or September.

Orufanran – an Owo chieftaincy costume of imported red cloth (aso adodo), cycloped like the skin of the armadillo or pangolin with ornaments of either brass or ivory. The costume is granted by the Olowo to only the highest ranking Chiefs.

Osanmasimi – three-dimensionally carved ram heads or human heads with ram horns, placed on the ancestral altars of Owo. The practice seems to stem from Edo practices.

Osanyin – the god of medicine, patron of herbalists

Osere – second ranking Owo chief, head of Ehinogbe quarter

Oshodi – the first title created by the Olowo for an alien in Owo. The Oshodi title was created by the eight Olowo, Asunsola and finally proscribed by Olowo Omasan.

Oshogboye – the sixteenth Olowo, said to have been trained in the court of Benin and to have introduced a number of Benin court traditions and rituals to the Owo court. Osogboye is also credited with making the decisive break with Benin.

Oshowe – a titled chief of Ehin-Ogbe quarter who serves as "traditional registrar of deaths and burials". The Osowe keeps the palm rib coffin which is used for the Oposi and Asigbo rituals.

Otu – a title association; also used for age-grade association. The word is apparently an Edo word. See Egbe also.

Otu ogwere – the age-grade for young boys.

Oye – title

Oyo – a traditional Yoruba state founded by Oranyan from Ife, son of Oduduwa. Oyo became the most powerful Yoruba kingdom in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and her territories included almost all the western Yoruba, stretching from the Niger to the coast into Dahomey.

Pakato – bands of beads worn diagonally across the chest by chiefs who have been granted the right to wear the Aghokun costume. The Olowo and the Ojomo may wear two Pakato. Other chiefs' wear but one.

Pele – three small tattoo marks made on the cheeks of Owo women, said to be for beautification.

Reregenjen - ninth Olowo, who began the Igogo festival in honor of his wife Oronsen. See Igogo and Oronsen

Sashere – a powerful Owo chieftaincy, formerly a war chief. The Sasere family owns the right to the Asigbo funerary cloth.

Shango – god of thunder. Sango, primary god of the Oyo, is missing in the Owo pantheon.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

VITA

I BIOGRAPHICAL

Name:	Oladipo Joseph Olugbadehan
Birth Date:	August 13, 1945
Birth Place:	Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria

II EDUCATION

Dates	Institution	Major Field	Degree
1977	College of New Jersey, Trenton, New Jersey	History	BA
1981	Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ	History	MA
1995	Columbia University, New York, NY	History	M.Ph.
2006	Union Institute & University, Cincinnati, Ohio	History	PhD.

III PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Employer	Position	Dates
Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria	Lecturer	1982-87
New Jersey State Judiciary, Probation Division, Middlesex Vicinage New Jersey	Senior Probation Officer	1992-present

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.